

REDISCOVERING SABBATH IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

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## PREFACE

My personal experience with Sabbath began while I was working on my thesis in plasma physics. During that busy period of time, I intentionally ceased work and focused on worship and rest every Sunday. Although this practice was done out of simple obedience instead of deep theological reflection, keeping Sabbath was highly beneficial to my spiritual growth and my personal well being.

Later, when I was serving at Boston Chinese Church of Saving Grace, I finally came to a deeper theological reflection on Sabbath. At that time, Saving Grace lost their founding pastor abruptly to stomach cancer and I took up preaching and teaching at the church. In view of falling Sunday attendance, I preached on the importance of keeping Sabbath, hoping that a guilt trip would motivate the parishioners to come to worship faithfully. However, as I reflected on Sabbath, I discovered that Sabbath meant a lot more than Sunday church attendance. A biblical understanding of Sabbath involved not only Sabbath days but also Sabbath years, and years of Jubilee. The more I studied Sabbath, the more I was convinced that Sabbath was more than a religious institution but also a very important social institution. Sabbath governs not only weekly worship but also involves forgiving debts, freeing slaves, and reforming land ownership. In short, Sabbath describes a “faith-based economy” — an economy very different

from what we have, a new paradigm we desperately need.

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Soli Deo Gloria!

## **ABSTRACT**

Modern workplaces and economic systems are often oppressive. This thesis looks at the liberating power of Sabbath and discusses its possible applications in modern workplaces. Two motivational principles are derived from the Genesis and Exodus references of the fourth commandment respectively. In turn, the two motivational principles give rise to four practical principles as their corollaries. The four practical principles correspond to Sabbath themes of faith, rest, community, and stewardship. Special focus is put on explaining these principles to a secular audience while avoiding the fallacy of a dualistic worldview. Instead, the biblical worldview is presented as series of concentric circles, thus emphasizing the active role of God in the institution of Sabbath. Implementation of Sabbath friendly practices are investigated on personal, institutional, and social levels. Specific curriculums for both church and corporate audiences are also included.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Sabbath is Important for Society

In the 2008 financial market collapse, the financial world awakened to the realization that a 10% or 13% return on investment is more likely a bubble than genuine growth. All over the world, people suffered directly from the effect of a “greed based economy”. I could not help but asked, “What if Wall Street had known about Sabbath — would it have made a difference?”

Unsustainable practices not only affect the US, but are prevalent around the world. In China, while the nation prospers, the people suffer. Factories put unreasonable pressure on their workers. A high profile case is Foxconn, the biggest electronics manufacturer in China and one of the manufacturers of the iPhone. There were eighteen people who committed suicide in FoxConn factories in Southern China in the year 2010. This series of suicides prompted public scrutiny of the conditions of workers in China. It was discovered that pay was not the major contributor to the suicides. Instead, unfair treatment from the superiors, long working hours, and social isolations were the main causes. Again the same question arose — “What if Foxconn had known about Sabbath, would

it have prevented its workers from literally working to death?”<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, housing prices have sky rocketed in all major Chinese cities including Hong Kong. Regular middle class families simply cannot afford housing. In many Chinese cities, forced evictions have become a daily routine to provide more land for developers to profit. Social unrest is brewing in many cities and has already broken out in a few instances. In 2014, Hong Kong experienced the “Umbrella Movement” which saw unprecedented anti-government demonstrations and occupation of major highways for more than two months. While the direct cause of the Umbrella Movement was a request for democracy, underlying difficulties in grass-roots economic conditions, especially housing prices, were major sources of discontent towards the government. “What if real estate developers and government officials had respect for the management of land as put forth in Sabbath regulations?”

The secular world, while not recognizing that all things come from our Creator, has also awakened to the need of sustainability. The burden now falls on the Christians to bring forth a theology behind sustainability and to bring this theology into actionable moral directions.

## **1.2 Sabbath is Important in the Modern Workplace**

Three forces are eroding the health of the modern workforce. They are:

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1. Wikipedia contributors, “Foxconn suicides — Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,” accessed 17-December-2014, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Foxconn\\_suicides&oldid=637423955](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Foxconn_suicides&oldid=637423955).

2. Jenny Chan, “A Suicide Survivor: The Life of a Chinese Worker,” *New Technology, Work and Employment* 28, no. 2 (2013): 84–99.

- Technology
- Globalization
- Increasing Economic Inequality

In each of the three forces above, workers today face the paradox of Sabbath: on one hand Sabbath is becoming a necessity — it is more important to keep Sabbath in order to counteract the damage of these forces; on the other hand Sabbath is becoming a luxury — it is more difficult to practice Sabbath.

### **1.2.1 Technology and Sabbath**

Technology allowed, encouraged, and now mandates a 24/7 work cycle. The pressure of working long hours is eroding the health of the workforce. Practicing Sabbath is becoming more difficult on one hand, and more essential on the other hand.

In addition to a 24/7 work cycle, modern technology also features rapid changes. Technology is making many skills in various industries obsolete. Innovation and creativity are essential for a successful career in this technology driven economy. The practice of Sabbath, for example the practice of sabbaticals in academia, will help restore the creativity and update the skills of our workforce. Just as farmers furrowed their land to restore its fertility, modern professionals may find sabbatical rests helpful in restoring their mental capacities.

### **1.2.2 Globalization and Sabbath**

Globalization accentuates the unhealthy pressure of technology on our workforce. Workers now routinely collaborates with others many time zones away. They also have to compete with others all around the world. Longer hours, lower pay, and stiffer competition are eroding into the workers' ability to enjoy a balanced life within the plan of God through the practice of Sabbath.

A global workforce spanning multiple time zones disrupts the circadian rhythm of the workers. Workers often find themselves attending teleconferences with the other side of the planet. A globalized culture also erodes the practice of Sabbath by putting workers of different religions together. As many other religions do not have a weekly rest cycle, the practice of Sabbath is no longer normal in a globalized workplace.

In addition to its toll on workers by disrupting their daily and weekly rhythms, globalization also erodes the sanctity of the land. A critical concept behind Sabbath is that land belongs to the Lord. The ecosystems are living systems created by God, and industrial globalization has damaged ecosystems on a global scale. We owe Sabbath not only to our people but also to our planet.

### **1.2.3 Economic Inequality and Sabbath**

Throughout the world, especially in regions that experienced rapid economic growth in recent decades, economic inequality is quickly becoming a critical social concern. The ranks of the working poor in most major Asian cities

are growing rapidly. Again Sabbath is the victim of this phenomenon. For many of the working poor, Sabbath no longer represents a blessed rest granted by a gracious God. Instead, Sabbath has become a luxury they cannot afford. How can low wage workers enjoy a day of rest, when they can only barely make ends meet working long hours seven days a week?

Here lies a paradox: such conditions for the working poor are exactly what the Lord intended to prevent through the Sabbath commandments. The fourth commandment specifically mandates that male and female slaves should enjoy the same Sabbath day as their masters. In Leviticus 25, the Sabbath day extends into Sabbath year and year of Jubilee. Both the Sabbath year and year of Jubilee have helping the poor as their core value. In particular, the redistribution of land in the Year of Jubilee ensured that there would not have been cross-generational poverty had the commandment been faithfully followed.

The condition of paradox in which modern workers find themselves was noted by London Business School social philosopher Charles Handy in his international bestseller *The Age of Paradox*. In this 1994 reflection upon the paradoxes within capitalism, Handy noted that, in the name of productivity and profitability, some workers are working excessively long hours, while others remained under-employed. In the words of a CEO, companies hires “half as many people, pay them twice as much, and produce three times as much”.<sup>3</sup>

While Handy came upon the paradoxes faced by modern workers from a

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3. Charles Handy, *The Age of Paradox* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 3.

secular perspective, his proposed solutions to navigate through the paradoxes resonate with Christian belief in general and Sabbath principles in particular. His ideas will be further discussed in chapter 3.

### **1.3 Discussions of Sabbath Among Christians**

Among the believing communities (Christians and Jews), there have been many discussions surrounding Sabbath as the practice of religious piety.

Common topics of discussions surrounding Sabbath are as follows:

- Is Sabbath a Jewish custom that is no longer binding for Christians?
- The Jews celebrate Sabbath on Saturday. The Seventh Day Adventists also argue that Sabbath should be on Saturday. Does it matter?
- Jesus frequently ran into conflict with the Pharisees regarding Sabbath.

What was that conflict about?

Such discussions are interesting and theologically important, and will be covered in chapter 2. However, the discussions surrounding the above questions often stay within Christian circles: as a result they lacking impact in addressing the pressing need of workers in the secular world.

### **1.4 Audiences and Objectives**

The overall goal of this thesis is to introduce Sabbath into our modern workplace. Since majority of Christians work in secular businesses, introducing

Sabbath into their work contexts will have to include providing them with a theoretical framework to interact with secular business leaders in promoting Sabbath friendly business practices. The primary audiences for this thesis are:

- Individual Christians working in a secular workplace.
- Christians business leaders who can influence how their businesses are run.
- Christian thinkers (including pastors and preachers) who want to provide an alternate paradigm to capitalistic business practices.

Ultimately, although indirectly, this thesis will be speaking to secular audiences through the witnesses given by the Christians who understand and apply Sabbath to their personal lives and their business decisions. Therefore much of the material in this thesis can be considered apologetic in nature.

Overall, the logic of this thesis follows a progression:

1. Biblical and theological data regarding Sabbath are organized into Sabbath principles.
2. Personal changes — Individual Christians apply Sabbath principles to their personal life in ways that are:
  - appropriate to the contexts of their workplaces
  - responsive to the demand of modern technologies
  - creative in their approaches
  - not legalistic

- beneficial to the overall health of the organization
  - balanced in both professional growth and personal growth
3. Institutional changes — Christian business leaders apply Sabbath principles to guide their businesses to:
- manage human resources in a sustainable manner
  - benefit both Christian and non-Christian employees
  - operate as a witness to other businesses
  - recognize and adapt to complex business environments
4. Social changes — As Sabbath principles are being practiced among individuals and institutions, society can change:
- from accumulating commodities to building communities
  - from being production driven to being provision driven
  - from measuring success by metrics to measuring success by health
  - from valuing competition to valuing collaboration
  - from being insatiable to being content

Following the above outline, chapter 2 is a survey of biblical text aimed at extracting Sabbath principles that are applicable to our current society.

Chapter 3 surveys scholarship from both Christians and non-Christian writers. Special focus is put on writers whose ideas reflect Sabbath principles on



a practical level — even though their references to Sabbath is sometimes oblique instead of direct.

Chapter 4 takes the principles discovered and expresses them with language and logic that are acceptable to a secular audience through a model which I have termed “concentric circle model”. The results of this translation of Sabbath principles are two motivational principles, and four practical principles.

Chapter 5 discusses applications of Sabbath on a personal level, institutional level and social level. Interleaved into these discussions are discussions of how churches can help in supporting Sabbath friendly changes at these levels.

Appendix A contains cases that illustrate certain applications outlined in chapter 5. Both positive and negative examples are cited.

Appendix B provides examples of how Sabbath principles can be taught within traditional church settings, as well as promoted innovatively through other channels.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BIBLICAL TEXTS AND THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS ON SABBATH

Exodus 20:8-11	Deuteronomy 5:12-15
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <i>For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.</i>	“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. <i>Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.</i>

Table 2.1: Comparing Two Versions of the Fourth Commandment

## **2.1 The Fourth Commandment**

### **2.1.1 Comparing Two Versions of the Fourth Commandment**

The focal point of Sabbath is the fourth commandment which was recorded in both Exodus and Deuteronomy. Table 2.1 compares the two renderings of the fourth commandment.

While the stipulations of both renderings are similar, the grounding behind the commandments are very different. In the Exodus version, the motivation for keeping the Sabbath is imitation of and obedience to the Lord in the rhythm of creation. While in Deuteronomy, the motivation behind Sabbath is to remember the Lord in his liberation of the Israelites from slavery in the past and to grant relief from heavy labor in the future.

If our focus of discussion is simply “Should New Testament Christians keep the Sabbath?”, then the two versions of the fourth commandment will appear to be contradictory. In the Exodus version, Sabbath is part of the creative order and therefore should be binding to all creation in general and Christians in particular. In the Deuteronomy version, Sabbath is the remembrance of liberation from Egyptian slavery. This is particular to Jewish history and celebration, and not binding to Christians.

The discussion of “Should New Testament Christians keep the Sabbath?” has taken the passages out of their original contexts. And therefore the ensuing contradiction is largely artificial. If we put the passages back into their respective contexts, the two types of motivations will be complementary instead of

contradictory.

In the Exodus context, the Israelites had just escaped from the tyranny of Pharaoh. The fundamental questions the Israelites had were “Who is this Yahweh God?” in general, and “How is Yahweh different from the gods we knew in Egypt?” in particular. Reference to the Creation was therefore intended to highlight the difference between Yahweh and the Egyptians gods.<sup>1</sup> Yahweh is self-sufficient, content, and enjoys rest. Egyptian gods demanded to be supplied, were insatiable and restless.

In Deuteronomy, the Israelites were at the doorsteps of the Promised Land. They were about to build their own nations. The concern here was to ensure that Israelites would remain free in their future nation. Remembering that the Israelites were once slaves motivated them to keep Sabbath and ensure a free and equitable society.

Walter Brueggemann pointed out the intricate relation between theology and socioeconomics: “if we want to understand this God (or any god), we must look to the socioeconomic system that god legitimates and authorizes.”<sup>2</sup>

Brueggemann used “commodity” versus “covenant relationships” to contrast the socioeconomic systems of the Egyptian gods versus Yahweh.<sup>3</sup> In this view, the second commandment’s prohibition of graven images of God can be viewed as prohibition of commoditizing worship.

Putting the Ten Commandments in the context of covenantal relationship

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1. Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

2. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 3.

3. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 6.

between the Lord and the Israelite, and putting that in contrast with the system of slavery within Egyptian theology, we can see how the fourth commandment envisioned a socio-economic system in which the provision of the Lord ensures freedom and prosperity for His people.

## **2.2 Sabbath in the Creation Narrative**

Exodus 20:11 points to the creation narrative as the motivation for keeping Sabbath. Therefore a study of the creation narrative (Gen 1:1-2:3) is central to a biblical understanding of Sabbath.

Unfortunately, many modern day discussions of the creation narrative are erroneously steered towards the creation versus evolution debate. Such discussions put the focus on the six days of “active” creations and do not pay enough attention to the seventh day. The seventh day seemed disjointed with the first six days.

In the ensuing discussion, I will focus on two theories of interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 that do not fall into this fallacy — “Cosmic Temple Theory” and “Framework Theory”.

### **2.2.1 Functional Creation of Cosmic Temple**

John Walton interprets the Creation Narrative within an Ancient Near East context,<sup>4</sup> as opposed to a modern materialistic world view. Ancient Near East world views did not consider the creation narrative as necessarily

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4. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

concerning the creation of the material world. While Ancient Near East world views did believe in God creating all material things, such belief would be taken for granted and would not have been the focus of either biblical or extra-biblical creation narratives. Instead, Genesis chapter 1 was the creation of functions: how the elements of creation were supposed to serve their purposes in a cosmos that was designed for the sake of the human race.

The biblical creation narrative differed from other Ancient Near East creation narratives in that in other Ancient Near East creation stories, the cosmos was created for the gods and humans were created to be slaves of the gods. In contrast, the biblical God was self-sufficient; consequently, creation was for the sake of humans. This view of creation and the role of human echos Brueggemann's view as describe in section 2.1.

The word "create" in Genesis 1, therefore represent a "functional" creation instead of a "material" creation. For instance, the sun and moon were "created" to "serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years" (Gen 1:14). These heaven bodies would have already existed, but they were given their functions to serve the human calendar on the fourth day.

If the narrative of Genesis 1 represents the assignment of functions to each created object, it is natural to ask the question: "so what was the ultimate combined function of the entire cosmos?" Walton suggests that in Ancient Near East cultural context, the answer to this question was that "the cosmos' function was to be a temple."

The six days of creation, therefore, narrated the creation of a cosmic

temple. Consequently, the seventh day, Sabbath, was when God moved in to dwell with his covenant people in this newly completed cosmic temple.

Walton's cosmic temple interpretation of Sabbath will be discussed more fully in section 3.1.6.

## 2.2.2 Framework Theory

Framework theory aligns the six days of creation into two triads, as depicted in Table 2.2.

Day 1: Light	Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars
Day 2: Sky and sea	Day 5: Birds and fish
Day 3: Land Vegetation	Day 6: Land Animals Human
Day 7: Sabbath	

Table 2.2: Days of Creation Arranged According to Framework Theory

The first column (Days 1 - 3) depicts the creation of three domains/kingdoms, and the second column (Days 4 - 6) depicts the creation of three rulers/kings. According to framework theory, the six days of creation need not be six twenty-four hour days, but instead were literary devices to layout a framework in which the orderliness of God's creation is the main theme.

In this understanding of Genesis 1, the "formless" and "empty" in Genesis 1:2, can be understood as "un-inhabitable" and "un-inhabited". The

same words were used in Jeremiah 4:23 to describe the desolation brought about by the punishment of the Lord against Israel's idolatry.

The Framework Theory fits well with the functional creation proposed by John Walton. While functional creation theory emphasizes that there were specific functions and purposes for each object of creation, framework theory demonstrates how each of the functions fit together. Finally as the divine image bearers, humans "Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Gen 1:28)

If we assume Mosaic authorship of Genesis, this narrative might have served to provide assurance to the upcoming conquest of Canaan. In Genesis 15:13-16, God promised Abraham that his descendants will inherit the Land of Canaan. However it would take four hundred years for the promise to be fulfilled. This four hundred years period can be viewed as God preparing the Land of Canaan to be a land flowing with milk and honey on one hand, and preparing the Israelites by making them numerous in Egypt on the other hand. Now that the Promised Land is ready with "large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant" (Deut 6:10-11), the Lord is ready to assign Israel as a Holy Nation over this Land. This process of preparing a domain and preparing the ruler of the domain followed the same pattern with which the Creator God created the cosmos.

With this understanding of creation narrative under framework theory, the seventh day of creation became associated with the fulfillment of the



conquest of the Promised Land. This theme was in fact picked up in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. The relation between Sabbath and the Promised Land will be picked up in Section 2.6.4.

### **2.2.3 The Eternal Sabbath**

While the first six days of creation all had “And there was evening, and there was morning — the n-th day.” formula, this formula was notably missing on the seventh day. The holy Sabbath was intended to be an eternal day.

The eternal nature of Sabbath fits well with Walton’s assertion of the world being a cosmic temple. The cosmic temple is the eternal dwelling place of God. God did not rest because he had become tired. God stopped because the job of building the cosmic temple was done. The meaning of the word “rest” here is not inactivity. Instead, “rest” describes the state of stability after a conflict or a conquest. Now that the temple had been built, God could rest in an eternal Sabbath by being enthroned in this cosmic temple, actively enjoying the fruit of his creation, dwelling among His people and engaging them in a loving relationship.

When the Israelites were commanded to imitate God in Sabbath keeping (Ex 20:11), that human Sabbath was cyclical, occurring once every seven days. Human Sabbath was not yet the perfect eternal Sabbath that our Lord enjoys, but a reminder of God’s sovereignty and His continual provisions. It is also a fore-shadow of the invitation to enter into the eternal rest characterized by mutual indwelling of God with humans. (Heb 4)

## 2.3 Sabbath and the Exodus

Following the two renderings of the Sabbath commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and after exploring Sabbath in the creation narrative, we explore Sabbath in the Exodus narrative.

Brueggemann<sup>5</sup> put Sabbath in opposition to the enslavement under the Egyptian theo-socio-economic system. Therefore understanding Egyptian economy provides a good historical background.

### 2.3.1 Oppression Under Egypt

Oppression of the Israelites under Egypt began during the great seven-year famine of Joseph. Although the Israelites themselves were protected by Joseph's position, the policies instituted by Joseph became the framework for their future oppression.

Figure 2.1 outlines how all of Egypt (with the exception of priests) came under servitude to Pharaoh. Notice that at the end Pharaoh took possession of all the land — a fact that was not lost by Moses in his legislation regarding Sabbath year. (See section 2.4.1)

Pharaoh, the Egyptian priesthood and their gods heavily influenced the socio-economics structure of Egypt. Egypt was an agrarian society in which prosperity depended largely on land ownership. In Egyptian theology, the land belonged to the gods: the land belonged to Osiris. After Osiris's demise, the

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5. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*.

There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace...

... they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "...Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

...So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt — still in force today — that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.

Figure 2.1: Policies of Joseph during the Famine Extracted from Genesis 47:13-26

land belonged to Horus and by extension to his earthly incarnation, the Pharaoh. Consequently “The vast majority of the population, probably more than nine tenths during the first two millennia of Egypt’s history, ... lived in a state close to serfdom.”<sup>6</sup>

Eventhough, by the time of Moses, Egypt was under the rule of another dynasty (Ex 1:8), the policy of Pharonic land control, collection of grain as taxation, and hoarding of grain apparently had continued. Genesis 47:26 mentioned that one-fifth taxation was “still in force today”. In Exodus 1:11, Israelites, as slaves, where building Pithom and Rameses as “store cities”. These verses pointed to the concentration of wealth towards Pharaoh, and the oppression of the slaves probably was not limited to the Israelites. Thus, Pharaoh feared that the Israelites might “join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

It was ironic that all the fears of Pharaoh came true as a direct result of Pharaoh’s effort in preventing an Israeli revolution. Because of Pharaoh’s fear, he treated the Israelites harshly. The Israelites were powerless to revolt, however the oppression provoked God to act on behalf of His people. (Exodus 3:7)

### **2.3.2 Provision of Manna**

The previous discussion established that, in the time of Exodus, theology and socio-economics were tightly intertwined. Therefore when The Lord established his covenantal identity as “I am the Lord your God, who brought

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6. [www.reshafim.org.il](http://www.reshafim.org.il), “Ancient Egyptian economy,” accessed 03-January-2015, 2014, <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/economy/index.html#population>.

you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2), he did not only take the Israelites out of slavery, he also took them out from under the control of the gods of Egypt. Slavery was simultaneously a socio-economic reality and a theological reality. The institution of Sabbath should therefore be viewed as both a religious institution and a socio-economic institution.

Before Sabbath was articulated as a commandment on Mount Sinai, it had already been introduced to the Israelites through the provision of manna in the Desert of Sin (Ex 16). There could be little doubt that the seventh day cycle of the provision of manna, with double provision on the sixth day and none on the seventh day, was a direct foretelling of Sabbath legislation.

We should notice the reference to Egyptian life in this story. First, the provision of manna was not only a response to the lack of food in the desert, but also a rebuke against grumbles that were reminiscent of “sitting around pots of meat and eating all the food we wanted” in Egypt. It was highly doubtful that an average slaves could have all the meat they wanted. However among the Israelites there might have been former nobles who could enjoy such a lifestyle.

The fact that manna could not be stored overnight (except for Sabbath preparation) was not only a training for the Israelites to have faith in the daily provision of God, it was also polemic against the Egyptian’s practice of hoarding grain. The Israelites had been slaves who build cities to store food. Now as liberated people, they were provided with food which cannot be and need not be stored.

A particular instructive verse was “the one who gathered much did not

have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.” (Ex 16:18). Such fairness in provision was an accusation to the uneven distribution of wealth under the Pharaoh’s economy. It is even instructive to our current economy which prides itself in maximal productivity, an economy in which those who gather much are wasteful while those who gather little struggle to survive.

## **2.4 Sabbatical System in the Mosaic Law**

In addition to Sabbath day, which was instituted in the fourth commandment, the concept of Sabbath and the number seven was expanded in Leviticus chapter 25 to declare the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee.

### **2.4.1 Sabbath Year**

Leviticus 25:1-7 legislated the Sabbath Year. The land, which God gave to the Israelites, would observe Sabbath the same way as the Israelite did. The land would follow a seven year cycle just as the people followed a seven day cycle. On the seventh year, the farmland was to have a year of rest, free from human cultivation.

While modern day industrialized urban dwellers often regard land as inanimate pieces of real estates that provide commoditized natural resources, ancient farming society viewed land very differently. Land was regarded as having life. Farming was God actively granting lives to the plants and consequently providing for His people. Plant growth was considered a

providential mystery. (Ps 104:14, 1 Cor 3:6-7)

The fact that the land needed “rest” affirmed that land should be viewed as a living member of the society, comparable to their “son or daughter”, “male or female servant”, “ox, donkey, or any of your animals” and “foreigner residing in your towns” as mentioned in the fourth commandment.

It would be unlikely, however, that ancient Israelites would have viewed Sabbath year as a way to maintain the fertility of the land, the way modern farmers practice fallowing or crop rotation. If this was the case, the Israelite would have learned to fallow their land from the Egyptians, as the Egyptians would have had superior farming technologies. There is no evidence that the Egyptians had any similar practice of periodically fallowing their land.

The land, even though it was uncultivated, would still be actively producing food (Lev 25:6-7). Such food would be unmerited by the farmer and therefore should not be considered his private property. Instead the food of Sabbath years should be shared by the entire community, including outsiders (hired workers and temporary residents), as well as domesticated and wild animals. The Promised Land was fertile enough to sustain a healthy agrarian society. The Sabbath years were to celebrate God’s abundance, instead of preventing scarcity.

#### **2.4.2 Year of Jubilee**

Leviticus 25:8-55 contained the complex rules regarding the Year of Jubilee. Year of Jubilee was the Sabbath of Sabbaths. After seven times seven

years which was forty nine years, the fiftieth year was to be a Year of Jubilee. The complexity of the regulation regarding the Year of Jubilee arose from the fact that it regulated the buying and selling of land and slaves — the two most important resources in ancient society.

The fundamental idea behind the Year of Jubilee was that both the people and their land belonged to the Lord:

The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. (v. 23)

..., for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (v. 55)

For that reason, both land and slaves cannot be permanently sold. However, the law recognized that bad fortune might make it necessary for some to sell their land or sell themselves. Notice that in an agrarian society, those who had sold their land would have a difficult time sustaining themselves and would likely come to the necessity of becoming slaves. In that case, a number of provisions were made to redeem what was sold. The specifics of such provisions are summarized in Table 2.3.

The practice of Jubilee was the extension of “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt” into their future lives in the Promised Land. “Remember that you were slave in Egypt” became “Don’t let yourselves or your neighbor fall



<i>Asset (Seller and Buyer)</i>	<i>Regulations Regarding its Sale and Maintenance</i>	<i>When and How to Redemption</i>
Note: The Israelites should help each other financially so as to make the sale of one's land or oneself as slave unnecessary. (vv. 35-38)		
Land (farmland)	Do not take advantage of each other (v. 14) Price to reflect the number of crops to be harvested until Jubilee. (v.15) (It is implied that land should not be sold to foreigners)	Nearest relative should redeem. (v.25) The original owner may redeem the land pay a fair price as soon as financially viable. (v.26) Should be returned to original owner in Jubilee (without payment) (v.28)
House in Walled city	Exempted from Jubilee regulation. (v. 30)	Can be redeemed within one year of sale. (v. 29)
House in unwalled villages	Same as farmland	
Note: The Levites receive tithe from the other tribes and therefore (theoretically) should be unlikely to fall into poverty. (Numbers 18:21)		
House in Levitical towns	Not exempted from Jubilee law	May always be redeemed by Levites. Must be return in Jubilee.
Land surrounding Levitical towns	Must not be sold. (v.34)	
Israelites sold to fellow Israelites	Do not make them work as slaves. (v. 39) To be treated as hired workers or temporary residents	Set free in Jubilee (v.40)
Foreigners sold to Israelite	Can be buy / sold / inherited. (vv. 44-46)	Can be treated as slave for life. (v. 46)
Israelites sold to foreigners as slaves	price to reflect the rate of hired worker and the number of year to the next Jubilee (vv. 50-53)	Should be redeemed as soon as financially possible by oneself or through a relative (v. 49) Had to be set freed in Jubilee.

Table 2.3: Jubilee Regulations Regarding Redemption of Land and Slaves

back into slavery". In order to maintain the freedom of the people, they needed to have a sustainable economic structure. For an agrarian society, it meant that the two most vital resources, land and labor, needed to be managed carefully. It began with recognizing the Lord's ownership and human's stewardship.

#### **2.4.3 Leviticus 26**

Biblical covenant documents consisted of six elements: preamble, prologue, stipulations, sanctions, witnesses, and documentation.<sup>7</sup> Leviticus chapter 26 was clearly written in a blessing-curse formula typically found in the sanctions of covenant documents.

In verses 1 and 2, the keeping of Sabbath was again linked to the prohibition of idolatry. Verse 13 again reminded the Israelites of their slavery in Egypt, under the oppression of idols. Verse 11 promised the dwelling of God among the people, which pointed to the concept of the cosmic temple.

#### **Blessings for Faithfulness**

When we examine the detail content of the blessings and curses, we can understand that these are the concerns the Israelites had regarding keeping Sabbath. First and foremost, keeping Sabbath meant not working the land to its fullest extent, and therefore food production would be their primary concern. Verses 3-5 and verse 10 addressed these concerns.

In a Sabbath year, part of the produce of the land would be allotted for

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7. Douglas Stuart, "Old Testament Survey," accessed 26-November-2015, <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/covenant-structure/old-testament-survey/douglas-stuart>.

wild animals (25:7); and in Jubilee, foreigners would need to surrender (or at least allow the redemption of) the land and the slaves they purchased. Therefore, protection from violence from wild animals and from foreign powers was also granted as blessings for faithfulness. (26:6-8)

### **Warnings Against the Violation of Sabbath**

Leviticus 26:14-39 warned against the violation of Sabbath, with verse 40-45 promising restoration after repentance.

The key feature of the curse formula is the phrase “seven times over” (vv. 18, 21, 24, 28), which is clearly a pointer to the Sabbath cycle. In each cycle, the punishment would be escalated, with the last escalation being exile away from the Promised Land. Each cycle of escalation was a direct result of the Israel’s refusal to repent.

This passage clearly associated the Exile with violation of Sabbath; especially the non-observance of Sabbath year (vv. 34, 43). The land belonged to the Lord. Therefore if the land was denied its rest, it would be accounted for as a debt that the Lord would need to enforce against Israel. Restoration would only be effected after the “Sabbath debt” had been paid (v. 43).

When this passage is studied in reference to Israel’s history, the prophetic nature of this passage becomes obvious. Israel’s repeated sin and stubborn refusal against repentance was prophesied. The Sabbath debt formula that was clearly laid out there also came to pass in Israel’s history. It might be difficult to get a precise date to mark the beginning and end of Israel’s history;

as the conquest of the Promised Land took many years (from Joshua until the time of King David). Similarly the Exile from the Land did not have a precise date as there was first the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians, and then multiple rounds of exile at the hands of the Babylonian. However, if we consider the conquest of Jerusalem (c. 1010 BCE) as the beginning of the Davidic dynasty, and the fall of Jerusalem (second Babylonian siege, 586 BCE) as the end, the reign of Israel over the holy land was roughly four hundred and twenty years. Given that there should be one Sabbath year for every six years of cultivation, seventy years of exile (Jer 25:9-12, 2 Chron 31:3) was a fair judgment against the Sabbath debt Israel had incurred.

## **2.5 The Practice of Sabbath in the Old Testament**

While the legislation of Sabbath was clearly presented in the Pentateuch, whether the laws were followed through Israel's history was a different matter. In Section 2.4.3, the violation of Sabbath as predicted in Leviticus 26 was discussed in association to the history of Israel in general and to the Exile in particular. In this section, we are going to survey the practice of Sabbath in the Old Testament.

### **2.5.1 Sabbath Practice Before the Exile**

Beyond the time of Moses, when the observance of Sabbath was dictated by the cycle of provision of manna, the observance of Sabbath after the conquest of the Promised Land was not well recorded. In fact, Sabbath was not mentioned

in the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. This is not surprising given the lawlessness during the period of the Judges (Judges 21:25).

Chronologically, it was not until the reign of David that Sabbath was again mentioned (I Chron 23:31). Incidentally, 1st and 2nd Samuel, which covered the same historical period, contained no mention of Sabbath. Note that the books of Chronicles were written with priestly interests, and the mention of Sabbath was in the context of Levitical duties; we can conjecture that by that time, Sabbath was largely considered a religious institution confined to temple worship.

Outside of the temple, Sabbath was mentioned only once during the monarchy, in 2 Kings 4:23 — ironically here Sabbath was practiced by a Gentile woman. This was the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman. When the Shunammite woman went to see Elisha after her son's sudden illness and death, her husband asked "Why go to him today? It's not the New Moon or the Sabbath." We can infer that the woman regularly practiced Sabbath to a point that even her Gentile husband recognized the special days.

### **2.5.2 Warning Against Violation by the Prophets**

"Violation of Sabbath" in modern Jewish discussion refers mostly to performing actions that constitute "work" as defined by the Talmud. However, among the prophets there were two ways to desecrate Sabbaths. In addition to working on Sabbaths, oppressive actions that created social injustice were also discussed as violation of Sabbath.

## Isaiah

Isaiah mentioned Sabbath in chapters 1, 56, 58, and 66. Among these references chapter 1 and 58 are warnings against improper attitude towards Sabbath.

Chapter 1 in particular linked the violation of Sabbath to social injustice. The Israelites were keeping Sabbath as religious ceremonies: they were bringing offerings on “New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations” (v. 13) However the Lord declared such religious ceremonies to be meaningless and detestable. Instead the Israelites were told to “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” (v. 17)

Chapter 58 began with a discussion of fasting and logically extended the true meaning of fasting to the true meaning of piety. Celebration of Sabbath was consequently included as practice of true piety. Here the discussion again was a focus on social justice: “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (vv. 6-7)

In both chapters 1 and 58, Sabbath was used as an example of religious observance. And the main failure of the Israelites was the dissociation of religious piety from social responsibility. If the practice of Sabbath, especially the practice of Sabbath year and Year of Jubilee, were effectively enforced, Israel

would be a more equitable society than the one that was condemned by the prophet. In Isaiah 5:8, the prophet condemned those who “add house to house and join field to field” and prophesied economic doom as punishment. “Joining field to field” would be impossible if sabbatical regulations laid out in Leviticus 25 were enforced.

The mentions of Sabbath in chapters 56 and 66 were in a positive light. Both passages bestow blessings to outsiders (eunuchs and foreigners) based on their faithfulness to the Lord. Here Sabbath and its blessings were not exclusive to the Israelites but were open to all.

## **Jeremiah**

Jeremiah 17:19-27 was focused on keeping the Sabbath as a sign of faithfulness to the Lord. We can see here the Sabbath regulation was transitioned into an urban setting as the location of the discussion was Jerusalem. Instead of understanding prohibition of work as farming activities like plowing and gathering fire wood, here the prohibition is against “carrying a load” pointing towards a urban trading economy.

The message here was straight forward and follows a familiar blessing versus curse formula. Keep the Sabbath, Jerusalem will have glory and be inhabited forever. Violate the Sabbath, Jerusalem will fall.

## Ezekiel

Ezekiel, being a prophet during the Exile, looked backward towards the history of rebellion. In chapter 20, Sabbath is described as a “sign between” God and the Israelites, “so they would know that I the Lord made them holy.” Here, Sabbath was highlighted to be a contrast between the active bestowing on the part of God and passive receiving on the part of the Israelites.

Then two parallel passages followed:

“Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—by which the person who obeys them will live—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths...” (v. 13)

“But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws, of which I said, “The person who obeys them will live by them,” and they desecrated my Sabbaths.” (v. 21)

Note here the violation of Sabbath was looked at as the summation of the violation of the Torah. At this point in Israel’s history, the Exile was already realized. The Exile was understood to be punishment for the rebellion, of which the desecration of Sabbaths was the prime example. Thus echoing the warning of Leviticus 26, which linked Sabbath to removal from the Promised Land.

In the latter half (chapter 33 and onward) of the book of Ezekiel, the theme of the book turned around from rebellion and punishment towards repentance



and restoration. In his vision of the temple (chapters 40-47), the restoration of Sabbath was an integral part of the overall restoration of the system of worship.

In 44:24, the priests were charge with upholding the Lord's laws and decrees. Keeping the Sabbaths holy was put forth as the prime example of obedience, in constrast with the desecration of Sabbath as the prime example of rebellion in 20:13 and 20:21.

Chapters 45 and 46 describe the institution of worship that was to be centered around "the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths". Offerrings were to be made, the temple gates were to open to the public, and people were to worship. As opposed to the fourth commandment, which prohibited working on Sabbath but did not dictate what to do instead of work, here Sabbath was, for the first time, associated with acts of religious worship.

### **Minor Prophets - Hosea and Amos**

Among the minor prophets, only Hosea and Amos mentioned Sabbath. In both cases, New Moons and Sabbaths were collectively uses as a reference to the religious activities. In Hosea 2:11, the Lord will stop the celebration of New Moons and Sabbaths as punishment for unfaithfulness, continuing the theme of an upcoming Exile.

The reference in Amos chapter 8 is more interesting. The Israelites were condemned for their injustice towards the poor. The oppressors were quoted as saying:

"When will the New Moon be over

that we may sell grain,  
and the Sabbath be ended  
that we may market wheat?"  
skimping on the measure,  
boosting the price  
and cheating with dishonest scales,  
buying the poor with silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

(Amos 8:4-6)

The observance of Sabbaths were far from being whole hearted. The oppressors were keen on carrying on their commercial activities - commercial activities that were dishonest and oppressive. Reflecting closely on the themes put forth by Isaiah, Amos condemned mere outward practice of Sabbaths. True Sabbath brings freedom, false Sabbath brings oppression.

## **Daniel**

Unlike the other major prophets, the word "sabbath" was not found in the book of Daniels. However the number "seven" was abundant. Daniel chapter 9 recorded a long prayer of Daniel which was sparked by Daniel's reading and understanding of Jeremiah 25:11. Daniel understood that the seventy years of exile was God's way to allow the Promised Land to enjoy the Sabbaths (Leviticus 26:35, 26:43). Sabbaths that were denied in the Land by the unfaithfulness of the

Israelites.

The ensuing prayer in Daniel 9 was a prayer of national repentance that was promised in Leviticus 26:40-45. When the people in exile “confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors”. The Lord will remember the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Land will be restored after it received the Sabbaths that were owed it.

The answer to the prayer was personally delivered by the angel Gabriel. Redemption was not immediately at hand. However, the ultimate redemption would come after “Seventy Sevens”, a sign that pointed to Jubilee of Jubilees. The Anointed One would bring forth this ultimate Jubilee, restore justice to the people and liberty from their sins.

This hope of “Seventy Sevens” or “Jubilee of Jubilees” was fulfilled in Jesus’s “Nazareth Manifesto”. See Section 2.6.2 for more discussion.

### **2.5.3 Post-exilic Period**

If the Exile was understood to be a punishment for violation of Sabbath, it was definitely effective. For there was a revived fervor in the keeping of Sabbath in the Post-exilic Period.

During the reform put forth by Nehemiah, the full assembly promised to end interracial marriage, keep the Sabbath (including sabbatical years), and donate to maintain the operations of the temple. (Neh 10:30-39)

Notice that during this historical period, Judah was only a province in the Persian Empire. In addition, it was surrounded by less than friendly neighbors.

Therefore, enforcing Sabbath was to interfere with commercial activities with neighboring tribes.

In chapter 13, the Israelites slid back on their promises made in chapter 10. Nehemiah 13:15-22 describes their violation of Sabbath and Nehemiah's reaction. Both people from Judah and outsiders were trading during Sabbath:

In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.  
(13:15-16)

Nehemiah rebuked the nobles of the city. Noting the untrustworthiness of the nobles, Nehemiah ordered the gates of the Jerusalem to be closed to disallow trading on Sabbath days; and he stationed his own guards to ensure compliance.

With the help of Ezra, Nehemiah's reforms eventually took hold in the post-exilic community and consequently Sabbath finally took hold among the Jews. By the time of the Roman Empire and the New Testament, Sabbath practices were still at the center of Jewish identity.

## 2.6 Sabbath in the New Testament

While discussing Sabbath in the New Testament, we have to be careful to distinguish between the practice of Sabbath among the Jews versus the practice of Sabbath among the Christians. To add to the confusion is the obvious fact that most Christians in the New Testament time were ethnically and traditionally Jewish.

### 2.6.1 Sabbath Among the Jews

Both biblical and extra-biblical evidences point to the central importance of Sabbath among the Jews during New Testament times. The strict adherence to Sabbath was so common among the Jews that it drew the attention of the Romans. To the Romans, Sabbath keeping was a sign of Jewish indolence. Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish apologist, wrote in defense of Sabbath:<sup>8</sup>

On this day we are commanded to abstain from all work, not because the law inculcates slackness... Its object is rather to give man relaxation from continuous and unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with a regular calculated system of remissions to send them out renewed to their old activities. For a breathing spell enables not merely ordinary people but athletes also to collect their strength with a stronger force behind them to undertake promptly and patiently each of the tasks set before them.

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8. Philo, *Philo Volumn VII, On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Books 1-3* (79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library), II, 60.

Here Philo used the analogy of an athlete taking a deep breath before exerting great strength to explain to the Romans, who were no doubt fond of the spectacles of athletics, the intention of Sabbath. As an apologist, Philo was skilled in removing the offense of the Jewish practices.

Within the Bible, the centrality of Sabbath in Jewish lives was best represented by the sharp controversy between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. Such conflicts were recorded in all four gospels; table 2.4 provides a summary of them.

If we look at these conflicts from the Pharisees' viewpoint, we realize how important Sabbath regulations were for their belief system. In the synoptic account of Jesus healing a man with a shriveled hand, the Pharisees were willing to plot to kill Jesus over what they perceived to be a violation of Sabbath (Mt. 12:14, Mk. 3:6, Lk 6:11). Notice that this event happened early in Jesus's ministry, when he was still an itinerant preacher in Galilee and was no immediate threat to the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Yet the Pharisees were deeply offended, to the point that Mark pointed out that they were willing to collaborate with their enemies, the Herodians.

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Occasion	Passage
Jesus' disciples picked heads of grain on the Sabbath	Matthew 12:1-8 Mark 2:23-28 Luke 6:1-5
Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand	Matthew 12:9-14 Mark 3:1-6 Luke 6:6-10
Jesus healed a crippled woman	Luke 13:10-17
Jesus healed a man at a Pharisee's house	Luke 14:1-5
Jesus healed a paralyzed man at Pool of Bethesda	John 5:1-16
Jesus defended his healings on Sabbath by appealing to Mosaic Laws	John 7:21-24
Jesus healed a man born blind	John 9:1-41

Table 2.4: Conflicts between Jesus and Jewish Religious Leaders Over Sabbath in the Gospels

## 2.6.2 Jesus's Teaching on Sabbath

### Conflicts with Jewish Religious Authorities

The majority of Jesus's teaching on Sabbath inevitably came from his responses to the accusation from the Pharisees, most of which were variations of "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Most of the conflicts between Pharisees and Jesus were instances in which the Pharisees disagreed with Jesus healing on Sabbath. In these cases, Jesus appealed to the fact that Sabbath was intended to do good instead of harm, which followed from the theme of "The Sabbath was made for man."

The immediate context of Mark 2:27, was not a healing miracle; rather, it occurred when Jesus's disciples were picking heads of grain while going through grainfields. Since the disciples were hungry, and they were not willfully

harvesting, eventhough it was only a minor emergency, it still falls under “The Sabbath was made for man”.

In the next verse “so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28), Jesus declared that he himself was the Lord of Sabbath. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Sabbath laws were part of the Law, which Jesus had come to fulfill.

The Gospel of John provides a different perspective from the synoptic gospels. Unlike the synoptics, which had the Messianic secret as one of their themes, John did not shy away from claims of Jesus’s deity. Therefore we can find direct claims such as “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” (John 5:17) This statement not only makes a claim to deity, but also reinforces that the concept of an eternal seventh day. God has been at “work” ever since the original Sabbath. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, when God finished his work of creation, he entered into his comic temple. He is still in charge of the world and is actively engaging with his creation.

In John 7:22-23, Jesus compared healing on Sabbath to performing circumcision on Sabbath. Since it was legal to perform circumcision on Sabbath, it should also be legal to perform healing on Sabbath. Notice that circumcision and Sabbath were both center pieces of Jewish identity. They were signs of holiness. It was legal to bestow holiness on top of holiness. Making a person whole was a most direct act of bestowing holiness.



## **Jesus and the Jubilee**

Mosaic Sabbath laws did not stop at observance of Sabbath days. Sabbath years and years of Jubilee were also part of the Sabbatical system. As we examine the Sabbatical system as a whole, we quickly discover that “Jubilee” was a central theme of Jesus’s identity.

In his first sermon of his public ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20), often called the “Nazareth Manifesto”, Jesus used Isaiah 61:1-2 to define his own ministry. His ministry was to liberate the poor, the prisoner, the blind, and the oppressed, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”. “The year of Lord’s favor” was a direct reference to “the Year of Jubilee”. This was a divine Jubilee. An earthly Jubilee restored land and freed slaves. This divine Jubilee restored justice and freed all sinners.

Later, when John the Baptist had doubts about Jesus’s Messiahship and sent his disciples to question Jesus, Jesus used very similar language to answer John’s disciples.

Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me. (Matthew 11:4-6)

The liberation of Jubilee, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, was the signature of Jesus’s Messiahship.

### 2.6.3 Apostle Paul's Teaching on Sabbath

N.T Wright pointed out that Paul was surprisingly silent on the topic of Sabbath<sup>9</sup>, especially when we realize that the Apostle Paul was formerly Saul of Tarsus - a devoted Pharisee.

On many occasions during Paul's ministry, he had to face with the question: "Do gentile Christians need to obey Jewish laws?" In particular, this question was central to the book of Galatians. Jewish laws in Paul's time consisted of three categories: Sabbath keeping, circumcision, and dietary laws. Galatians explicitly answered that gentile Christians need not keep the latter two categories of Jewish laws. However, regarding the question of Sabbath, Galatians was silent.

Sabbath was also missing from the other side of the argument. If we ask, "Now that gentile Christians do not have to keep Jewish laws, then what laws should they obey?" The short answer was, "They should love one another." Paul, in Romans 13:8-10, elaborated on that short answer:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command:

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor.

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9. N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022: Harper Collins, 2013), 144-145.

Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Paul was obviously quoting the Ten Commandments here. The commandments regarding worshiping the one true God, no idolatry, honoring His name, honoring one's parents are implicitly assumed to be applicable to Christians. However, the fourth commandment was again curiously absent. "Love your neighbor as yourself" somehow did not explicitly include "Let your servants rest."

In addition to articulating the commandments that we should follow, Paul also has lists of sins we need to avoid. Again, Paul's description of sinful people also lacks mention of Sabbath:

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor 6:9-10)

In this anathematic list of wrongdoers, "Sabbath-breakers" was nowhere to be found.

Paul's only explicit reference to Sabbath provided an explanation to its curious absence from his other epistles:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a

Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

Here sabbaths and other religious festivals were categorized as “a shadow of things that were to come”. N.T. Wright argues that the “things that were to come” are to be summarized in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. As he wrote, “Justification by faith alone is, as it were, a new radicalization of the ancient sabbath.”<sup>10</sup>

We have to note that Paul was not abolishing Sabbath all together, but only putting aside the cumbersome religious regulation that defined Sabbath at his time. The moral applications of Sabbath were kept by Paul. In particular the liberating power of Sabbath was not lost to Paul, although he did not use Old Testament references to push his case. In the heat of debate between Paul and the other apostles on the whether gentile Christians need to keep Jewish laws, both sides agreed that “we should continue to remember the poor” (Gal 2:10).

Since liberation from slavery was a major theme of Sabbath, Paul’s position on slavery was instructive on his understanding of Sabbath’s social application. In this respect, Paul was not silent. In the book of Philemon, as well as in other epistles, Paul did not directly opposed the Roman institution of slavery. However, he compassionately plead with Philemon to accept Onesimus as a fellow brother instead of as a slave. In Ephesians 6:5-9, Paul instructed both slaves and masters, emphasizing that they are equal in the Lord. Although, Paul did not directly confront the Roman institution of slavery, as doing so would

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10. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 159.

have caused major chaos, he took away its sting by removing the abuse and oppression and putting both masters and slaves on the same level in the Lord.

#### **2.6.4 Sabbath Explained in the Book of Hebrews**

The book of Hebrews made the connection between Sabbath and justification by faith in Jesus explicit. The argument that the author of Hebrews put forth in Hebrews chapter 4 can be summarized as follows:

1. In Psalm 95, there was an invitation "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (Ps 95:7-8)
2. The Israelites of the Exodus were not faithful, therefore God denied them from entering his "rest". (Ps 95:11)
3. The unfaithful Israelites failed to enter the Promised Land.
4. Therefore we can equate "my rest" to "entering and dwelling in the Promised Land."
5. The Israelites eventually succeeded in entering and dwelling in the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua.
6. The invitation of Psalm 95 was made AFTER Joshua.
7. Therefore the "rest" of God must be greater than the Promised Land.
8. This "rest" should therefore be equated with the Sabbath-rest that God enjoyed on the seventh day of creation.

Old Testament Sabbath-rest	New Testament Sabbath-rest
Offered by Moses	Offered by Jesus
Rest = enter and dwell in the Promised Land	Rest = enter and dwell in God's cosmic temple
God prepared the land by driving out the Canaanites	God completed creation on the seventh day
Israelites should enter rest by faith (which they failed)	Believers should cease their work = be justified by faith alone

Table 2.5: Comparison of Old Testament Sabbath-Rest with New Testament Sabbath-Rest Put Forth in Hebrews Chapter 4

9. The people of God now have an invitation to enter this Sabbath-rest.
10. Moses (and Joshua) failed to bring true rest to the people of God, while Jesus succeeded in doing so.
11. To enter the divine Sabbath rest, the believers should rest from their own work.

Therefore Hebrew chapter 4, which was a continuation of the argument in chapter 3 in which Jesus was compared to Moses, put forth a comparison between Old Testament Sabbath-rest and New Testament Sabbath-rest, summarized in Table 2.5. If we accept Walton's theory that Genesis 1 was the account of the creation of a cosmic temple, the parallel here would be exact. We can readily argue that the Promised Land is a parallel to the cosmic temple.

### 2.6.5 How did Jesus Fulfilled Sabbath

By the time of Jesus, the practice of Sabbath had become a complex web of religious regulations. Jesus fulfilling Sabbath took away the cumbersome

regulations. Instead, the path to the true eternal Sabbath was opened to all believers. The holiness that was bestowed upon the first Sabbath was now made real in the person of Christ.

John Piper describes Jesus's fulfilling the Old Testament by remarking on the following changes:<sup>11</sup>

- The blood sacrifices ceased.
- The priesthood that stood between worshipper and God has ceased.
- The physical temple has ceased to be the geographic center of worship.
- The food laws that set Israel apart from the nations have been fulfilled and ended in Christ.
- The establishment of civil law on the basis of an ethnically rooted people has ceased.

The Sabbath regulations should cease as part of the civil law. True holiness is now available exclusively through the person of Christ. In the past, certain human activities were considered capable of bestowing holiness (sacrifices) and a certain particular geographic location was deemed holy (the temple). In the new regime, these particular functions have ceased. Similarly, the Sabbath day is no longer particularly holy as compared to the other six. In Christ alone can holiness be found. Old Testament religious practices surrounding

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11. John Piper, "How Christ Fulfilled and Ended the Old Testament Regime," accessed 27-November-2015, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-christ-fulfilled-and-ended-the-old-testament-regime>.

Sabbath was the shadow of the reality that was brought forth in Christ. The Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath is justification by faith alone. In the past, believers were commanded to cease work; in Christ, we are to cease our own efforts but to receive by grace through faith our justification.

Sabbath was intended to be both a social and a religious institution. While the religious institution that was distinctly Jewish ceased to be applicable, the social aspects of Sabbath are still in play. Humans are still physical beings that need rest from labor. A seven day cycle of work and rest have served society well and for practical purposes should be the default work-rest cycle for the majority of societies. However in special cases of exceptionally demanding work, extra rests should be prescribed.

In addition to providing rest for individuals, the social institution of Sabbath also provide rest for society by liberating the oppressed and disadvantaged. This was the emphasis of Jesus' earthly ministry that was in direct conflict with the teachings of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, while keeping up with the religious regulation surrounding Sabbath, failed to realize the social impact provided by true Sabbath.

Finally, we have to note that while I have categorized Sabbath into "religious" and "social" aspects, such distinctions follow mostly a western love of categorizing everything into neat categories. The original biblical authors would not have make such distinctions. Sabbath has always been and will always be multi-faceted.



### 2.6.6 First Day of the Week

One of the points of discussion around Sabbath keeping among Christians is the question of whether Sunday serves as “Christian Sabbath”.

As N.T. Wright pointed out, the jump from the the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week was a “large hermeneutical step”.<sup>12</sup> In our previous discussion, we have established that Sabbath was fulfilled in Jesus. The Christian equivalent to Jewish Sabbath therefore should not be another day on the calendar. If we have to name a Christian equivalent to Jewish Sabbath, it should be the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

The practice of Christians meeting on the first day of the week began as early as the time of the apostles (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2). The apostle John also refers to the first day as “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10). However there were no indications that Christians refrained from work on that day. As they lived in a pagan world, it would be extremely impractical for them to request a day off from work given that they had come from all walks of life, including slaves.

So what were the apostles doing on the first day of the week? It was documented (Acts 20:7) that they celebrated communion on that day. They were not reenacting Old Testament Sabbath on a different day just to be different from the Jews. They were celebrating the freedom that came from the death and resurrection of Christ. Old Testament Sabbath, together with many other Old Testament types, had already been fulfilled in Christ. Neither on the last day of

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12. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 147.

the week nor on the first day of the week are special.

We should not forsake regular meetings to maintain vital and vibrant spiritual lives (Heb 10:25). Doing so on Sunday is probably the most practical. However, such practicality should not be elevated to a point of hindering ministry. Appendix A.1 presents an example of how a ministry that was intentionally arranged around Mondays benefited service industry workers.

## **2.7 Summary of Sabbath Principles**

After surveying Old Testament and New Testament teachings, let us summarize Sabbath principles in a point by point manner.

### **2.7.1 Sabbath is Both a Religious and Social Institution**

Since its institution, Sabbath has always been both religious and social. In Mosaic regulations, the Jews are required to involve the Gentiles in various aspects of Sabbath. The slaves, Gentile and Jewish, were to rest with their Jewish masters on Sabbath days. Foreigners were allowed to eat of the natural produce of the land during Sabbath year. Foreign slave owners had to allow for Jewish slaves to be redeemed over Jubilee year. If Sabbath was purely religious, Gentiles would not have been allowed to participate.

### **2.7.2 Sabbath Regulates Economic Production**

Observing Sabbath not only means having less time to work, it also means we should use our essential resources in a fair and non-exploitive manner.

As discussed in Section 2.4, Leviticus 25 defined Sabbath year and Year of Jubilee regulations. These regulations surrounded the buying, selling, and redemption of land and slaves - the two commodities central to agriculture. In Section 2.5.2, we saw how Prophet Isaiah equated social injustice to Sabbath violation.

### **2.7.3 Failure to Observe Sabbath is a Debt**

All living creatures need rest. The need for rest is built into creation and applies not only to individual creatures but also ecosystems. In Section 2.4.3, we saw that the failing to observe the Sabbath year is a debt to the land. When ecosystems, natural or artificial, fail to get rest, debts are created.

### **2.7.4 Sabbath is Remembrance of the Acts of God**

Built into the fourth commandment is the requirement to remember the acts of God. In the Exodus rendering, we are to remember the Creation. In the Deuteronomy rendering, we are to remember His Salvation.

### **2.7.5 Eternal Sabbath and Temporal Sabbath**

Beyond the divine arrangement of the seven-day Sabbath day cycle, the seven-year Sabbath year cycle, and the seven times seven year Jubilee cycle, there is an eternal aspect to Sabbath. The first Sabbath when God rested from His work of creation was an eternal day, without evening and morning. Section 2.6.4 explains how Christians are invited into the eternal Sabbath.

### **2.7.6 Sabbath is a Means and an End to Christian Living**

Sabbath is both a means and an end to Christian living. Regular rest is essential for maintain the health of an individual as well as the health of a organization. It is a law of nature written into creation and therefore applies equally to Christians and non-Christians. In this respect, Sabbath rest is a mean to a sustainably productive life.

For Christians, Sabbath also provides time for worship. Meeting one day a week for worship have been the tradition of believing communities, both Jewish and Christian, since the beginning. Again Sabbath is a mean to vibrant Christian living.

The essence of worship is to enter into the holy presence of God. The Apostle Paul declared the purpose of Christian living as “To live is Christ”. (Phil 1:21) Therefore Sabbath, specifically the eternal Sabbath in Christ, is the end to Christian living.

### **2.7.7 Community Over Commodity**

Brueggemann in his work *Sabbath as Resistance* drew a contrast between Egyptian deities and Yahweh God.<sup>13</sup> Egyptians deities were gods of commodity. The God of of Israel is a God who forms covenant community with his people.

Sabbath is the expression of putting community over commodity. We cease the production of commodities and focus on building community.

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13. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INTERACTING WITH CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP

#### 3.1 Theological References to Sabbath

##### 3.1.1 Abraham Heschel

Abraham Heschel's *The Sabbath* is more of a beautiful tribute to Sabbath than a book of theology. The book focuses on the holiness of Sabbath from a Jewish point of view. In the three orders of creation: time, space, and matter: "the sanctity of time came first, the sanctity of man came second, and sanctity of space last."<sup>1</sup> Among Heschel's many analogies to Sabbath are included a palace,<sup>2</sup> and a bride<sup>3</sup>— both of them are images of exquisite holiness. On the other hand, Sabbath stands in contrast to technologies. "Technical civilization is man's conquest of space... But time is the heart of existence."<sup>4</sup> Heschel argues that Judaism is a religion of time, centered around Sabbath and stood in complement to the technical civilization.

While Heschel repeatedly called on people to celebrate Sabbath— calling it a

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1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (18 West 18th Street, New York, New York 10011: Farrar, Strass / Giroux, 1951), location 240, Kindle.

2. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, chapter 1.

3. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 47.

4. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, location 154, Kindle.

“delight” and a “coronation of a day”,<sup>5</sup> his book did not offer very much instructions on how to celebrate Sabbath. Perhaps he assumed his readers to be familiar with Jewish Sabbath customs. It is more likely, however, that Heschel does not want to emphasize the ritualistic side of Sabbath. This deficiency is augmented by his daughter Susannah Heschel’s introduction. Her intimate recollection of how her family celebrated each week provided a glimpse into how Sabbath bound them together as a family and how the invitation to celebrate Sabbath was extended to friends and relatives.

### 3.1.2 Marva Dawn

In her *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, Marva Dawn uses four verbs to engage Sabbath: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, and Feasting. She tries to cover every aspect of Sabbath – ceasing from every form of busyness, resting every part of our being, embracing every facet of goodness, and feasting in every way possible. For Christians who are inconsistent in keeping Sabbath, this book is very valuable in motivating us to experience Sabbath in a new and more complete way, as Dawn shares from her own experience in practicing Sabbath.

Like Heschel, Dawn makes the contrast between time and space. In her discussion of “embracing time instead of space”<sup>6</sup>, Dawn uses Jesus’s healing on Sabbath to remind us to embrace time with people. Time is people oriented (space is material oriented). “When we spend time embracing persons, we

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5. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 6.

6. Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting Embracing, Feasting* (255 Jefferson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49593: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), chapter 17.

discover many new and wonderful things about them.”<sup>7</sup>

Many of Dawn’s ideas are similar to the Sabbath principles presented in this thesis. She discussed productivity, resting in various dimensions, giving, one’s calling, etc. Her language was artistic and personal, radiating warmth; which serves as a wonderful contrast to the cold, hard reality of the business world which is this thesis’s focus.

### 3.1.3 John Calvin

John Calvin wrote about Sabbath as the fourth commandment in his *Geneva Catechism*<sup>8</sup>. He upholds that the belief that the ceremonial Jewish observance of Sabbath had been “abolished by the advent of Christ”.<sup>9</sup> For Christians, Sabbath serves three purposes: “To figure spiritual rest; for the preservation of ecclesiastical polity; and for the relief of slaves.”<sup>10</sup> Spiritual rest means stopping our work and letting the Lord’s Spirit work on us. Calvin was quick to point out that spiritual rest should be performed all days of the week instead of just on Sabbath. We need to meditate on the word of God daily, but “because of our weakness” should have one special day in which we meet to “hear the doctrine, engage in public prayer, and make confession of their faith”<sup>11</sup> That is what he refers to with the term “ecclesiastical polity”. Slaves should be relieved on Sabbath. Such relief, too, should extend to the other days: “For when

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7. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, 120.

8. John Calvin, “Geneva Catechism,” accessed 14-December-2015, 1545, Q168-186, [http://www.reformed.org/documents/calvin/geneva\\_catechism/geneva\\_catechism.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/calvin/geneva_catechism/geneva_catechism.html).

9. Calvin, “Geneva Catechism,” Q170-171.

10. Calvin, “Geneva Catechism,” Q173.

11. Calvin, “Geneva Catechism,” Q179.

one day is devoted to rest, every one accustoms himself to labour during the other days.”<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1.4 David Gill

In his 2004 book *Doing Right* David Gill presented the Ten Commandments as basis for modern ethical practices. Given that this book was an exposition of the Ten Commandments, naturally Sabbath was featured.

Gill distinguishes ethical rules into “cover principles” and “area principles”.<sup>13</sup> Cover principles are general broad principles like “Love God” or “Love your neighbors as yourself”. Area principles are narrower, applicable to specific areas. Under this definition, the fourth commandment is a area principle: “Set aside and guard regular sabbath time focused on being *with* God. Give six days of creative and faithful work each week in service *for* God.”<sup>14</sup> It is a commandment that governs both work and rest.

As a book that covers all ten commandments, it cannot go into too much details in one commandment. Instead discussions on each commandment follow a framework that refers back to the cover principles. For instance, discussion of each commandment circles back to how the application of the commandment will increase freedom or enhance community.

This book discusses community as the means and the end of ethics.

Community can support individuals in making and keeping ethical decisions

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12. Calvin, “Geneva Catechism,” Q180.

13. David W. Gill, *Doing Right: Pricticing Ethical Principles* (P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426: Intervarsity Press, 2004), location 194, Kindle.

14. Gill, *Doing Right*, location 1576, Kindle.



(means). Individuals following ethical principles will enhance the unity and health of community (end). However it lacks discussions of communities as agents of ethics. Collective behavior and corporate decisions should also be subject to the guidance of ethical principles. Leaders and decision makers need to derive a deeper and more complex set of ethical decisions. For instance, forgiveness is a virtue that is required of Christians. We should forgive those who sin against us as God has forgiven us of our sins. However, when a judge is sitting on the bench, his or her decision whether to pardon a criminal will be very different than an individual's exercise of forgiveness.

In the case of Sabbath, the fourth command is the only commandment among the ten commandments that explicitly include outsiders as participants. The commandment even extends to animals. Keeping Sabbath has always been a community affair. Leviticus 25 includes discussion of how various corporate systems (systems of farming, land ownership and slavery) are required to observe Sabbath.

### **3.1.5 Walter Brueggemann**

Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, wrote *Sabbath as Resistance* in 2014<sup>15</sup>. In this short book, Brueggemann examines the original Mosaic Sabbath commandment in the context of Egyptian slavery. He presents Sabbath as "Resistance to Anxiety," "Resistance to Coercion," "Resistance to Exclusivism" and "Resistance to

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15. Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

Multitasking.” These categories are bracketed by the first chapter, “Sabbath and the First Commandment”, and the last chapter “Sabbath and the Tenth Commandment”. In this arrangement, the first chapter concerns “loving God” and the last chapter concerns “loving your neighbor.”

Although Brueggemann presents Sabbath as resistance to a number of categories, there is one underlying theme behind those categories: YHWH God is different from the gods of Egypt (and the gods of this world). The gods of Egypt were insatiable and restless. YHWH God was restful and covenantal. Sabbath was therefore based upon covenantal community, which stood in contrast with the gods of commodity, gods made out of gold. In this respect, Sabbath is resistance to idolatry, although Brueggemann did not explicitly use that as a chapter title.

Sabbath relates to the other commandments in the vein of covenantal community. By putting community over commodity, Sabbath keepers do not “need to dishonor mother and father,” “do not need to kill,” “do not need to commit adultery,” etc.<sup>16</sup> These sins are anxieties that arose out of “the death system of Pharaoh”. The economic system that a community allows is directly reflective of the God/gods they worship.

Following the logic of community versus commodity, the treatment of land is very different in a Sabbath honoring system. In a commodity centered system, land is something that can be sold in a transaction. In a covenant community, land is an inheritance and a birthright.

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16. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 31.

The last chapter discusses Sabbath relating to “love your neighbor.” Covetousness is antithetical to loving one’s neighbor. Coveting someone’s wife, house, land, and means of production (servants and animals) was especially disruptive to an agrarian peasant’s life. The Old Testament example of Ahab and Jezebel’s seizure of Naboth’s land was cited as an example. The unequal power between the royal family and a common farmer was noted. Such imbalance of power against the poor was to be amended by the practice of Sabbath, in particular Moses’s commandments regarding cancellation of debts, release of slaves, and redemption of land.

I follow closely the arguments of Brueggemann in developing my applications of Sabbath in the workplace. In particular, Brueggemann is concerned with the nature of Sabbath reflecting the attributes of God, while there is less emphasis in this book on rituals and actions on particular days of the week. Thus its arguments can be translated into general principles that are applicable to beyond the religious community.

One of my practical principles— “Value Community Over Commodities” was directly inspired by this book.

### **3.1.6 John Walton**

John Walton, in *The Lost World of Genesis One*, approaches the interpretation of Genesis chapter 1 with the world view of the Ancient Near East. His argument is that in the Ancient Near East, the original readers of the creation narratives would understand the narratives as descriptions of a

“functional creation”; instead of a “material creation” that is prevalent in the modern world view.

In a functional creation, the objects of creation were given their purposes by the Word of God. The Hebrew word *bara*, has a range of meaning which often involves creation of functions. It does not necessarily mean **creating** an object from non-existence into existence. Rather, it can mean **installing** an object into its God-given purpose.

While Walton uses this position to argue against concordism— the practice of using science to explain the Bible, and put an end to unnecessary conflict between the Bible and science— the book contains a wealth of interpretation concerning Sabbath. In Walton’s scheme, each object of creation had its purpose. Since God himself is self-sufficient, the purposes of the objects of creation were to ensure the well being of humanity. Putting all the objects of creation together, the combined purpose of the cosmos was to form a temple. A temple was where God dwelled with His people and managed His creation. In Walton’s words, the cosmic temple was God’s “control center.”

Therefore, Sabbath was when the building of the temple was completed and God moved in to take up His position. “Rest” therefore represents the end of conflict or chaos, and the beginning of a new steady state— for example “the Lord had given [King David] **rest** from all his enemies around him” (2 Sam 7:1) Walton’s own analogy to Sabbath is a U.S. president taking up residence at the White House after completing an election: “it is not simply so he can kick off his shoes and snooze in the Lincoln bedroom. It is so he can begin the work of

running the country.”<sup>17</sup> God did not created Sabbath because he was tired from the work of creation, nor was he inactive during Sabbath.

This interpretation of Sabbath avoids the fallacy of deism. God definitely did not create the universe and let it run its course from a distance. Instead, God has always been actively involved, taking control from his cosmic temple. We, as his creatures, “recognize his role of Creator God by our observance of the sabbath, in which we consciously take our hands off the controls of our lives and recognize that he is in control.”<sup>18</sup>

### 3.1.7 N.T. Wright

In *Scripture and the Authority of God*, N.T. Wright chose Sabbath as one of his case studies to demonstrate how to interpret scriptures in modern applications.<sup>19</sup> I use the ideas of Wright extensively throughout this thesis.

The discussion begins with contrasting Old Testament Sabbath with New Testament Sabbath. Sabbath is prominent in the Old Testament, while it is curiously absent in Paul’s writings. When Jesus taught about Sabbath, he repeatedly took a position that was in conflict with that of the Pharisees.

This apparent contradiction between the Old and New Testaments continued into Christian history. On one side is insistence some Christians—especially the Puritans— that Sabbath practices are to kept on Sunday; on the

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17. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 75.

18. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 122.

19. N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022: Harper Collins, 2013), chapter 9.

other side is the secular world's abandonment of Christian values, and regarding Sabbath regulations as rigid and boring. Are the Puritans holding onto something that was already abolished in the New Testament, and "who says Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Christian Sabbath anyway?"<sup>20</sup>

After going through an exposition of Old Testament and New Testament data on the topic (that I am not going to repeat here) Wright asserts that the "Christian equivalent" to Sabbath is not refraining from work on Sunday. Sabbath (time), together with the Temple (space), and matter (food, drinks, Passover meal), have all been fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore Old Testament "rest on Sabbath" should be replaced with "celebrate Jesus." It is appropriate to designate Sunday as Lord's day and celebrate corporately with each other through a special meal.

Eventhough the work of Christ is complete, the time is still evil (Eph 5:15-16). Jesus himself said that he would be among the poor and needy (Mt 25:31-46). Therefore our Sabbath celebration should include the liberation of the oppressed.

## **3.2 Practical References**

### **3.2.1 Development as Freedom**

#### **Background**

Harvard professor of Economics and Philosophy, Amartya Sen provides a thorough treatment of the topic of freedom in terms of economic realities in his

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20. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 146.

book *Development as Freedom*. Amartya Sen won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics and was instrumental in formulating the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI). His book incorporated much of his research in the formation and prevention of famine as well as his work in formulating the HDI. The HDI represents three aspects of his discussion of freedom: life expectancy, education, and income. In “*Development as Freedom*”, he listed many other aspects of freedom as keys to human welfare: gender equality, employment opportunities (especially opportunities for women), and freedom to participate in government to name a few.

## **Summary**

The central idea of *Development as Freedom* is that freedom is a better indicator of the success of an economy than traditional metrics such as GDP. Freedom, according to Sen, encompasses many aspects that are universally held by most cultures as valuable. For example, the freedom of access to adequate food supply is universally valued.

Sen describes freedom as both the ends and means of development. Freedom is the end of development in that freedom is evaluative. That is, the multiple dimensions of freedoms are together a better measurement of development than simple measurements like GDP, or personal income.

Freedom is also the means of development. The development of an economy depends largely on the free agency of its citizens. Sen provided examples where honoring and enhancing the free agency of the people provided

better development results than compulsory measures.

Another argument for freedom as the means of development is based on the idea that one form of freedom develops other forms of freedom. For instance, the freedom of literacy helps provide freedom of employment as well as freedom of political participation. Ultimately, a key way to exercise freedom is for a community to define what freedom is for the community itself. Different communities can and will have differing values assessed to various aspects of freedom. True freedom is when all members (women and the poor included) of a community can participate in defining their idea of freedom instead of only having a few selected authoritative figures defining freedom for everyone else.

In summary, Sen's thesis on freedom are:

- Freedom is universally valued.
- Freedom is multi-faceted, including not only political freedom but also income, employment, education, and other economic capabilities.
- Enhancing one form of freedom will bring about enhancement in other forms of freedom.
- Freedom is a better measurement of economic development than traditional measurements. (freedom as ends)
- Enhancing freedom and/or relying on the free agency of the population are better ways to enhance economic development. (freedom as means)



There are a number of Sen's arguments that deserve deeper investigations. They are listed below.

### **GDP Does Not Tell the Whole Story**

As a measurement of development, GDP on the national scale, or income on the individual scale, are not good predictors of welfare. An example given in the book is that life expectancy of an African-American male living in a major US city is actually lower than a similar male population in India— even though the income of the African-American male is more than one hundred times that of his India counterpart.

### **Develop Freedom Early**

An over-emphasis on GDP risks missing key opportunities to put human development into the forefront. Human development— for example health care and education— takes more human capital than material capital. Therefore human development is cheaper when the salaries of professionals (e.g. teachers and doctors) are low. Focusing on freedom, which points toward human development, will give decision makers the opportunity to tackle problems early when it is significantly cheaper to do so.

### **One Form of Freedom Leading to Another**

Another reason for putting various aspects of human development under the umbrella of “freedom” is that one form of freedom leads to other forms of

freedom. For example, improving education will improve income.

Focusing on freedom encourage decision makers to regard the citizenry as free agents. The agency of individuals allows people to operate with the resources available to them to achieve their desired outcome. The decision makers therefore are freed from being caretakers of passive patients but instead they become enablers of active agents.

From his study on famine, Sen notices that in modern history no famine has broken out in countries that have a functional democracy. Take the case of India: the Bengal famine of 1943 happened under British rule where a number of administrative failures contributed to the famine. After India's independence, the country was actually poorer economically. But even during worse economic and climatic conditions, a famine never broke out again. Similarly the Irish famine occurred largely because of colonial rule of the British Empire. The worst famine of modern history occurred in Communist China. Mao's own reflection on the famine realized that the famine occurred because of lack of freedom of information in a non-democratic society.<sup>21</sup>

### **Freedom to All Segments of Society**

Sen also emphasizes that true freedom should cover all segments of society— in particular, women. He compared the effect of a coercive approach by China versus the voluntary approach of Kerala, India in reducing fertility rates. In Kerala, reduction of birth rate was achieved through providing education and

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21. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019: Anchor Books, 2000), 182.

out of home employment opportunities to women. Compared to China's infamous one-child policy, Kerala's approach had achieved a better level of reduction (1.7 births per 1000 in Kerala vs. 1.9 per 1000 in China) without the side effects of coercion. For example, in China there is an abnormally high rate of abortion of female fetuses as well as higher infant mortality of young girls.<sup>22</sup>

### **Freedom is Not a Western Idea**

Finally Sen departs from the study of economics to argue against the notion that freedom is a Western idea while Eastern philosophies are about harmony and unity. He pointed out that there was much literature in Eastern philosophies that was concerned with the freedom of individuals, while there was much oppression and "unfreedom" in Western societies. Freedom is a universal ideal.<sup>23</sup>

### **Theological Response**

#### **Rethinking Freedom in Biblical Context**

When Christians discuss freedom, they often confuse the discussion of freedom with the theology of free will and the Calvinist versus Arminian controversy. While such theological debates are important and have long and interesting histories, to the suffering people of most parts of the world, these debates sound a lot like fiddling on the roof top while the city is burning.

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22. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, chapter 8.

23. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, chapter 10.

Amartya Sen's work, though Sen himself is not a Christian, serves to redirect Christians' understanding of freedom back to a more biblical context.

Christians have to realize that much of the bible was written to audiences that were suffering from various forms of oppressions— foreign (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome) and domestics (idolatrous rulers in the Old Testament and Pharisees in the New Testament). We have already examined in Section 2.6.2 the centrality of the message of Jubilee in the ministry of Jesus. This is clearly freedom language. In addition, the categories of freedom quoted here are not “spiritual” freedom but instead highly tangible human freedom. The focus is on “the poor”, “the prisoners”, “the blind” and “the oppressed”.

Jesus's primary audiences— namely the first century Jews— were heavily oppressed people. They faced not only spiritual oppression (e.g. demon possession) but also political and often military oppression by the hands of the Romans, religious oppression at the hands of a corrupted priesthood and legalistic Pharisees, and economic oppression through heavy taxation. There were famines, including one that was recorded in the book of Acts. A student of the New Testament should be able to point out as much “unfreedom” in New Testament time as in our modern time.

Therefore the notion that Jesus the Messiah cared only for the spiritual freedom of his people is simply unthinkable. Instead, much of his ministry and most of his miracles dealt directly with earthly, tangible freedom.

The acts of liberation that Jesus performed were a continuation from the Old Testament – a theological continuation of the Exodus and Mosaic Laws. The

Exodus was obviously centered on freedom from slavery. However the Exodus involved many other aspects of freedom as well.

To an agricultural society, land ownership was central to freedom. God did not lead the Israelites from being slaves into being unemployed. Instead, God was fulfilling his promise of giving the Israelites their “land flowing with milk and honey.” The emphasis on land ownership and freedom was already discussed in section 2.4. Similar to New Testament themes, Old Testament’s definition of freedom involved not only spiritual freedom (freedom from idolatry) but emphasized economic freedom.

The Apostle Paul wrote extensively about spiritual freedom, especially against legalistic Jews (e.g. book of Galatians). However, he also wrote about other facets of freedom, including slavery (Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians 6:9), freedom from oppressive governments (Romans 13, I Timothy 2:2), and also his own financial freedom as a tentmaker (Philippians 4).

### **Where the Biblical Concept of Freedom Differs from Sen’s Description of Freedom**

As an economist, Amartya Sen looked at freedom as an economic phenomenon. Thus he opens up a discussion of freedom that encompasses many aspects that were neglected in Western social and theological thinking. This helps Christians to reexamine their theology that was heavily influenced by western democratic society and open our eyes to a more historically accurate perspective on biblical description of freedom.

However Christians have to emphasize the moral aspects of freedom that

Sen does not adequately handle. This can be seen from Sen's use of the very unnatural term of "unfreedom" instead of the more common word "oppression". When there is oppression, there are oppressors, and the oppressors need to bear moral responsibility for their oppressive actions. We should not shy away from considering the direct relation between sin and oppression.

Conversely, genuine freedom does not originate from economic activities. In order to be liberated, there needs to be a liberator. As much as unfreedom and oppression are directly related to sin, freedom and liberation are directly related to forgiveness of sin. Since genuine forgiveness is divine, genuine freedom is also divine.

### **3.2.2 The Age of Paradox**

#### **Background**

With the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989, capitalism emerged as the winner after decades of battle against communism. Since then capitalism, as the only remaining dominant economic ideology, has had to face its own challenges. British philosopher and bestselling author Charles Handy's 1994 book *Age of Paradox* made keen observations and boldly raised questions regarding the "paradoxes" of capitalism and suggested bold solutions.

After twenty years, this book proved to be prophetic. The paradoxes listed have become more prevalent. What were originally European observations are now present in major markets around the world including the U.S. and

Japan.

## **Summary**

The book was divided into four parts. The first part of the book describes the paradoxes. They include phenomena like low paying jobs are being unfilled because the wages they pay are below livable levels; innovative jobs are also being unfilled because our education system cannot catch up with their requirements; new jobs favor younger workers making older workers facing mid-career changes; people's careers are being shortened, while people's life spans are getting longer; the rich are getting richer while the average people are falling behind.

In addition to being descriptive of the problems, the book is also prescriptive in terms of solutions. The second part of the book named three ways to navigate the paradoxes: first, the sigmoid curve, which means that companies need to constantly innovate despite earlier successes; second The (inverse) Donut principle – which means that jobs should have a core set of tasks as well as a donut of related tasks surrounding the core that gives the workers the freedom to explore new horizons; third, the Chinese contract – which means that we should seek for collaborative win-win situations over competitive win-lose situations.

The third part of the book describes the structural changes needed to face the paradoxes; organizations need to decentralize with each local entity being collaborative and responsible decision makers instead the headquarters serving as the sole decision center. Individuals should realize their multiple levels of

loyalty - to the local community as well as to the federated community. Societies should build their value system not around money but around people.

The concluding fourth part of the book highlights the need for meaning in life. We are not empty raincoats (Empty Raincoats was the name of the book when it was first published in the U.K.) but instead the raincoats are filled with meaningful beings. Otherwise, all of our struggles against these paradoxes would be utterly meaningless.

### **Sabbath as Solution to Paradoxes**

While “The Age of Paradox” was not a religious book, nor was Sabbath mentioned at all among its pages, many ideas in it were Sabbath-friendly. The overlapping of these ideas is not a coincidence, but is due to the fact that they are both solutions to the same problem - the over-exertion of a poorly regulated capitalist system.

A few of the paradoxes are very Sabbath-related, e.g. Those who have jobs are working extra-long hours while there are people who cannot find jobs. The solution provided can be summarized into two main categories: focus on community and continuous innovation, both of which are highly Sabbath related.

In chapter 5, we will revisit many of the ideas in this book.

### **3.2.3 Douglas Hall — Living Systems**

On a theoretical level, Dr. Douglas Hall’s ministry in the City of Boston was based upon principles developed in Jay Forrester’s *Urban Dynamics*, which



later developed into the field of system dynamics. However Dr. Hall did not operate on a theoretical level. Instead, his book “The Cat and the Toaster” took a personal approach, recounting his church planting experience in the street of Boston. The principles of system dynamics were put into practical guidelines in living, breathing ministry.

## **Background**

Dr. Douglas Hall is the President of Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston and an adjunct professor with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He served with his wife Judy in the city of Boston since 1964. He discovered that ministry in an urban setting involved a high level of complexity which made a traditional church planting approach ineffective. This book presents the concept of living system ministry.

## **Summary**

The title for this book “The Cat and the Toaster” came from an analogy that outlines the main theme of the book. God’s creations are alive, a cat being an example. In contrast, human creations are inanimate—for example a toaster. One can take apart a toaster and put it back together with relatively simple tools. A living system, on the other hand, is highly complex. The tools and methods used in operating on a toaster will kill the cat.

The book started with the early experience of ministry in Boston when Hall learned many of his lessons the hard way. Then the lessons learned were

summarized as understanding living systems: living systems are complex. Applying external forces on living systems generates side effects that often cancel or reject the original intention of the forces. Changes in a living system come from internal forces.

A leap was made to extend the living system paradigm from physical living systems into social living systems. The analogy was listed as follows:<sup>24</sup>

1. have life because of the Giver of Life
2. need nutrients
3. need an immune system
4. can die
5. have purpose
6. demonstrate a high level of internal and external interrelationship and complexity
7. have thought processes
8. can accommodate inorganic realities

The conclusion of social systems being living systems is that ministry depends solely on God as human work is insufficient to affect real changes. There must be a change in our thinking - a paradigm shift to the redemptive method.

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24. Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat and The Toaster* (199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene OR 97401: Wipf / Stock Publishers, 2010), 62.

When redemption is working, sinners are changed into saints. And when redemptive thinkg and redemptive actions are working in living systems, problems are changed into assets!<sup>25</sup>

The redemptive method looks for long term gain. Unintended side effects are noticed, confessed, and redeemed. People who are redeemed become assets and bring about redemption to others.

The rest of the book applies redemptive method to change the way a ministry operates: how to observe the needs and challenges of the system, and how to effect changes from the inside instead of from the outside. Overall let God be in control.

### **Sabbath and the Living System**

While this book does not mention Sabbath, connecting the ideas in this book with Sabbath is natural and effortless: if our social systems are living systems, and all living systems need rest, our social systems need rest.

In order to appeal to a secular audience, however, we need to take one step back and return to the theoretical framework of system dynamics laid down by Jay Forrester. Our social systems are complex multivariable dynamic systems. When these systems operate, they not only generate the desired effects, but also a range of side effects. When these side effects are allowed to accumulate, they will put the systems out of balance and reduce their productivity or even threaten their stability. On the other hand, living systems are self correcting:

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25. Hall, *The Cat and The Toaster*, 157.

therefore when they are at rest, they will have the ability to re-balance themselves. Thus our social systems—including societies, governments, corporations, schools and churches— need rest.

The next step in the process is to outline what “rest” means to these social systems. Again Sabbath principles apply. The first step is reflection: a recognition of the nature of each social systems. We need to reflect upon the purpose and history of our organizations. We also need to reflect on an organization’s dependency on the ecosystem, which in turn will bring us to recognize our dependency on the Giver of Life. Finally we need to recognize the debts we are accumulating and seek “redemption” of these debts.

### **3.2.4 Mismeasuring Our Lives**

In February 2008, then president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, commissioned prominent economists Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi to set up a commission of the world’s leading experts to re-examine and fundamentally change the ways governments measure economic performance. In Europe and around the world, economic data as reported by the experts were becoming more and more out of sync with the citizen’s experience of life. Citizens whose lives were seriously disrupted by financial crises were deceived by the experts. The way economic performance was measured had not kept up with changes in the world. “We have wound up mistaking our representations of wealth for the wealth itself, and our representations of reality

for the reality itself.”<sup>26</sup> Changing the way economics performance was measured was urgently needed to change not only the academics, and the statistics, but to change politics and behavior.

The commission’s work became *Mismeasuring Our Lives*. It conclusively proved that focusing on GDP as measurement of an economy is insufficient to accurately reflect reality. The shortcomings of GDP includes:

- It measures the average income but not income distribution. Therefore it cannot alert against inequality.
- It fails to reflect quality of life: for instance leisure is very important in maintaining quality of life, however leisure does not have economic value in the GDP.
- It fails to reflect the deterioration of the environment or the depletion of natural resources.
- It fails to account for the role of innovation. Innovation may bring future income, but it also increases the rate of depreciation of capital goods as they become obsolete faster.
- Foreign investors may repatriate profits away from a country. The repatriated profits are included in the GDP, but do not contribute to the income or the well-being of the local nationals.

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26. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up* (38 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013, USA.: The New Press, 2010), location 79, Kindle.

- It does not accurately measure the value of government services.

There are other economic parameters that capture some of the above activities that GDP fails to account for. For example, we can look at household expenditure as a measurement of the well being of a household. We can measure the physical capital of the natural resources buried under the ground. Overall, to paint a full picture of the economy, we need a balance sheet of income, consumption and wealth.

In conclusion, the commission did not replace GDP with another economic indicator, for no single indicator can capture the diversified economic activities that contribute to the well being of the people. Many of such activities are conducted outside the control of the market and it is difficult to assign to them monetary values. Instead, in many situations— for example in measuring sustainability and environmental conditions— a well designed dashboard of indicators is needed.

One of the principles put forth in this thesis is putting mission before metrics. The deficiency of GDP is a global example of putting too much emphasis on one metric. Leaders need to define a clear mission (e.g. to protect the environment) before carefully defining and selecting metrics that measure the performance accorded to the mission. I am borrowing the concept of a “dashboard of indicators” and use that to define and select metrics that help fulfill the mission of an individual or a corporation.

### 3.3 Technology and Sabbath

One of the key powers that deny people of their Sabbath is technology. Conversely, Sabbath is a powerful tools for us to put technology back into its place as our servant not our master. I have picked two books that deals with the topic of technology and Sabbath. One from a secular perspective, and the other from a Christian perspective.

#### 3.3.1 Technopoly

##### Summary

Neil Postman (1931-2003) wrote eighteen books and more than two hundred magazine and newspaper articles. The most famous of which is *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985). In 1971, he founded a graduate program in media ecology at the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU.

In his 1992 book, *Technopoly*, he discussed the impact of technology on society. Technology, in his definition, is the human ability to use tools to solve problems. In this definition, technology is not limited to electronics or other physical devices. Technology includes ways of thinking and abstract tools like the IQ tests.<sup>27</sup>

Postman describe technopoly as the third phase of human's increasing dependency on technology. The first phase is a tool-using culture. Humans use and inventing tools to solve problems. The second phase is "technocracy". In a

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27. Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019: Vintage Books, 1992), location 1310, Kindle.

technocratic society, technology dictates what problems are solved and how they are solved—the proverbial “when all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.” Technopoly is when technology becomes an end to itself. Society seeks efficiency as its primary goal. It believes in technological calculation more than human judgment; and believe that the affairs of its citizens should be guided by experts.

Postman proposed solutions to technopoly; he call these people “resistance fighters”. His descriptions of “resistance fighters” are:<sup>28</sup>

“Those who resist the American Technopoly are people

- who pay no attention to a poll unless they know what questions were asked, and why;
- who refuse to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations;
- who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical powers of numbers, do not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgment, or precision as a synonym for truth;
- who refuse to allow psychology or any “social science” to pre-empt the language and thought of common sense;

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28. Postman, *Technopoly*, location 2680, Kindle.



## Sabbath and Technopoly

Technopoly, simply put, is bad science. It is over-simplifying a complex world. In our discussion of living systems, we describe social systems as complex organic systems. Technopoly reduces the complexity of these systems to a point that it denatures and destabilizes them. Social policies are reduced to poll numbers. Innovation and progress are reduced to efficiency and productivity. Postman himself used ecological language to describe technopoly:

“Technological change is neither additive nor subtractive. It is ecological. I mean “ecological” in the same sense as the word is used by environmental scientists. One significant change generates total change... A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything.”<sup>29</sup>

In freedom language, Technopoly is the denial of freedom. Calculations and numbers removes people from the freedom of making one’s own judgment. Experts replace the agency of the lay people.

In commodity versus community language, technopoly does not only value commodity over community, it actively tries to redefine community as commodity.

Therefore, technopoly is opposite to Sabbath. Solutions proposed by Postman naturally are therefore Sabbath friendly. He proposed the teaching of history, including the Bible. Emphasizing history is akin to the

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29. Postman, *Technology*, location 291, Kindle.

remembrance/reflection Sabbath principle. Sabbath can help the “resistance fighters” to build communities, regain freedom, and make them truly “living” as image-bearers of the Creator.

### 3.3.2 Creating a Tech Sabbath Habit

As opposed to *Technopoly* which gives “technology” a broad definition, Bryan Brooks uses a narrow definition that is restricted to electronic devices. His discussions reflect his personal experience of how he struggled with addiction to his devices and how this addiction affected his spiritual life.

The book provides lists that diagnose “when does technology becomes too much”<sup>30</sup>. And it have a collection of actionable disciplines that help create and maintain a Sabbath Habit regarding use of technology.

This book is very practical and many ideas contain here will be incorporated in chapter 5. However, the book also has some shortcomings. While this book did not use the word “addiction”, the symptoms the author describes are classic symptoms of Internet addiction. When addiction becomes pathological, then professional help is needed. A self-prescribed behavioral regiment may only make matters worse. Tech Sabbath should not be a set of rules that applies to an individual. At least, it should be a community effort to change the values that drive our addiction to technology. For example, the “LG Syndrome” (always seeking latest and greatest)<sup>31</sup> is a value-system that is

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30. Bryan Brooks, *Creating a Tech Sabbath Habit* (127 E. Trade Center Terrace, Mustang, Oklahoma 73064, USA.: Tate Publishing / Enterprises, LLC, 2011.), location 177ff, Kindle.

31. Brooks, *Creating a Tech Sabbath Habit*, location 562, Kindle.

embedded in our communities. Without engaging both believing and secular communities, it will be difficult for individuals to exercise the suggestions in the book.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EXPLAINING THE THEOLOGY OF SABBATH TO A SECULAR WORLD**

Bringing Sabbath into the modern workplace is like building a bridge from the religious world into the secular world. The challenge coming from the Christian side is two-fold: The first challenge is to establish Sabbath as both a religious and a social institution. A second challenge is to avoid being legalistic in its application.

#### **4.1 Sabbath in a Theistic Worldview**

Before we can attempt to translate the theology of Sabbath using secular language, we have to answer two basic questions; the questions are: “Is it meaningful?” and “Is it possible?”

The first question asks: “Can a non-believer meaningfully celebrate Sabbath?” For instance, when a non-believer has one day off a week, he does not go to church; instead he spend his off day gardening or watching sports. Does that qualify as Sabbath?

The second question asks “Can a people outside the circle of faith understand such a complex and heavily controversial topic?” Given that even believers have differences regarding the meaning of Sabbath, what can we bring into the secular world?

To tackle such a daunting task, I will borrow the approaches of N.T. Wright and John Walton. Their approaches to explaining their respective topics—Christology for Wright and Genesis for Walton—are to highlight the differences between the biblical worldviews and other worldviews.

N.T. Wright points out that there are three sets of worldviews: pantheistic, deistic, and theistic (Christian). Pantheistic worldviews believe that the realm of God/gods and the realm of this world are one and the same: the gods operate in the same realm as humans. Deistic worldviews believe that the realm of God does not intersect with the realm of this world: heaven is infinitely removed from the earth. God does not interfere with the physical world on a daily basis, and it takes a major miracle, or death, for human beings to interact with heaven.

The biblical worldview, as proposed by Wright, is neither pantheistic nor deistic; it is theistic, monotheistic to be exact. While God's realm cannot be approached through human efforts, God actively participates in human affairs. God is active at chosen times, chosen locations, and works through chosen people. If you asked a person in biblical times, "Where can you find God?" he would not have answered "You do not need to find God because God is everywhere.", which would be an example of pantheism. Nor would he have answered "You cannot find God because God is far away in his heaven.", which would have been an example of deism. He would have said, "If you want to find God, go to the temple." The temple was the location where God chose to dwell among His people. Just as the temple is the chosen location, Sabbath is the chosen time.

## 4.2 Sabbath and Holiness

Abraham Heschel artfully exalted Sabbath as a “Palace in Time.” Sabbath was the first object in creation to be called “holy.” In his book, *The Sabbath*, he made the argument that Judaism is unique as a “religion of time”<sup>1</sup> rather than a “religion of space.”<sup>2</sup>

I agree with Heschel that the dimension of time is divine. Humans have no means to control time. Humanity, with advanced technologies, has apparently conquered space through various modes of travel. Time, however, remains exclusively in the hands of God.

I suspect that calling Sabbath as a “Palace in Time” is a clever word play by Heschel. For in Hebrew, “Palace” and “Temple” are the same word (*hekal*). To continue the analogy, we can also call Sabbath as a “Temple in Time”.

This reminds me of John Walton’s depiction of the creation story as the creation of a “cosmic temple.” Walton asserts that the acts of creation in Genesis were “functional creations.” The combined functions of created objects in the cosmos were to be a temple. What is a temple? A temple is where God’s throne is located, in Walton’s word, God’s “command center.”

When compared to pagan creation stories of the Ancient Near East, and the temples of the same period, the Genesis story and the cosmic temple are notably anthropocentric. Unlike gods of other nations, the true Creator God has

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1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (18 West 18th Street, New York, New York 10011: Farrar, Strass / Giroux, 1951), location 229, Kindle.

2. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, location 175, Kindle.

no need to be fulfilled by His creation. Therefore the cosmos was created by God for humans. Humans were not created as slaves of God, but as His image-bearers.

Taking this understanding, Sabbath became the time when God took control of the universe. The construction of the temple was completed in six days. The seventh day was the day when God moved into the temple to dwell with His people in intimate covenant relation forever.

Holiness, therefore, is directly related to the presence of God. Without God's presence among the Israelites, the Exodus would be a failed adventure (Ex 33:14-15). Walton in his second book, *the Lost World of Adam and Eve* reiterated this point with a "house" versus "home" analogy. Without a family living in a house, the house is just a house, but not a home. With the presence of a family, the house fulfills its function as a home. Holiness is the quality that brings the realm of God into the realm of our world.

The three dimensions of creation— time, space, and matter— can now be viewed as three inter-related manifestations of holiness. In the dimension of time, God had designated "holy times" of which Sabbath is the first example. In the dimension of space, God had designated "holy spaces," which we refer to as temples. In terms of matter, God has created human beings in His image. Therefore we should be discussing "holy people."

#### 4.2.1 Concentric Circles of Holiness

When describing Sabbath and holiness, we need to be mindful of the worldviews of our audiences, ourselves, and the biblical authors. Among modern western audience, pantheistic worldviews are less prevalent, but deistic worldviews are alive and well even in Christian circles. How often do evangelistic materials refer to “heaven” as a place where we go after death? Compare that to how we present the Kingdom of God as an “already-but-not-yet” reality of “heaven-on-earth,” and we realize that we have been inadvertently preaching deism through our evangelism.

If we think in terms of graphical/geometric images, deism describes the holy and the mundane as two separate parallel planes. They are separated and they never intersect. One needs to perform a miraculous quantum leap— or experience death— to move from one to another. When applied to Sabbath, there is the eternal heavenly Sabbath of God in the upper heavenly plane, and there is a shadow of that eternal Sabbath on the lower earthly plane as human temporal Sabbath.

I therefore use a different geometric structure that I term “concentric circles of holiness.” God elected certain time, places, people, and events to inject His holiness into the world and His influence outflows in a sequence of concentric circles. God is present in our world. He is active in our world. We can find God if we meet Him at the place and time that he appoints.

When salvation history moved into new epochs, the concentric circles of



holiness evolved. In each historical period, God elected different focal points to interact with the world. God and His holiness never changes, however the who, what, when, and how of His interactions with the world change.

The ultimate and final point of interaction between God and the world is the person of Christ Jesus. The three categories: “holy time,” “holy space,” and “holy people” are connected at the top. That is to say “the most holy time,” “the most holy space,” and “the most holy person” are all fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

Since concentric circles are geometric concepts, it may be easiest if we start with investigating the concentric circles of holy spaces.

**Concentric Circles of Holy Spaces** As we have discussed in section 2.2.1, we can view the entire creation as a cosmic temple. This forms the outermost circle. As we progress to Genesis chapter 2, we see that the Garden of Eden was also a temple. The Garden of Eden, where God walked with Adam, was the inner circle of holiness. (See figure 4.1, top set of concentric circles.)

As history progressed, the concentric circles of holy space evolved. After the fall, the Garden of Eden was no longer the meeting place between God and humanity. A new system of holy spaces was coming into existence. This set of concentric circles became fully developed at the completion of the temple. The outermost layer is still the world: “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps 24:1). Among all the places on earth, the Promised Land was given to the nation of Israel to form a holy nation; within the nation of Israel, the city of Jerusalem; within Jerusalem, the temple. Inside

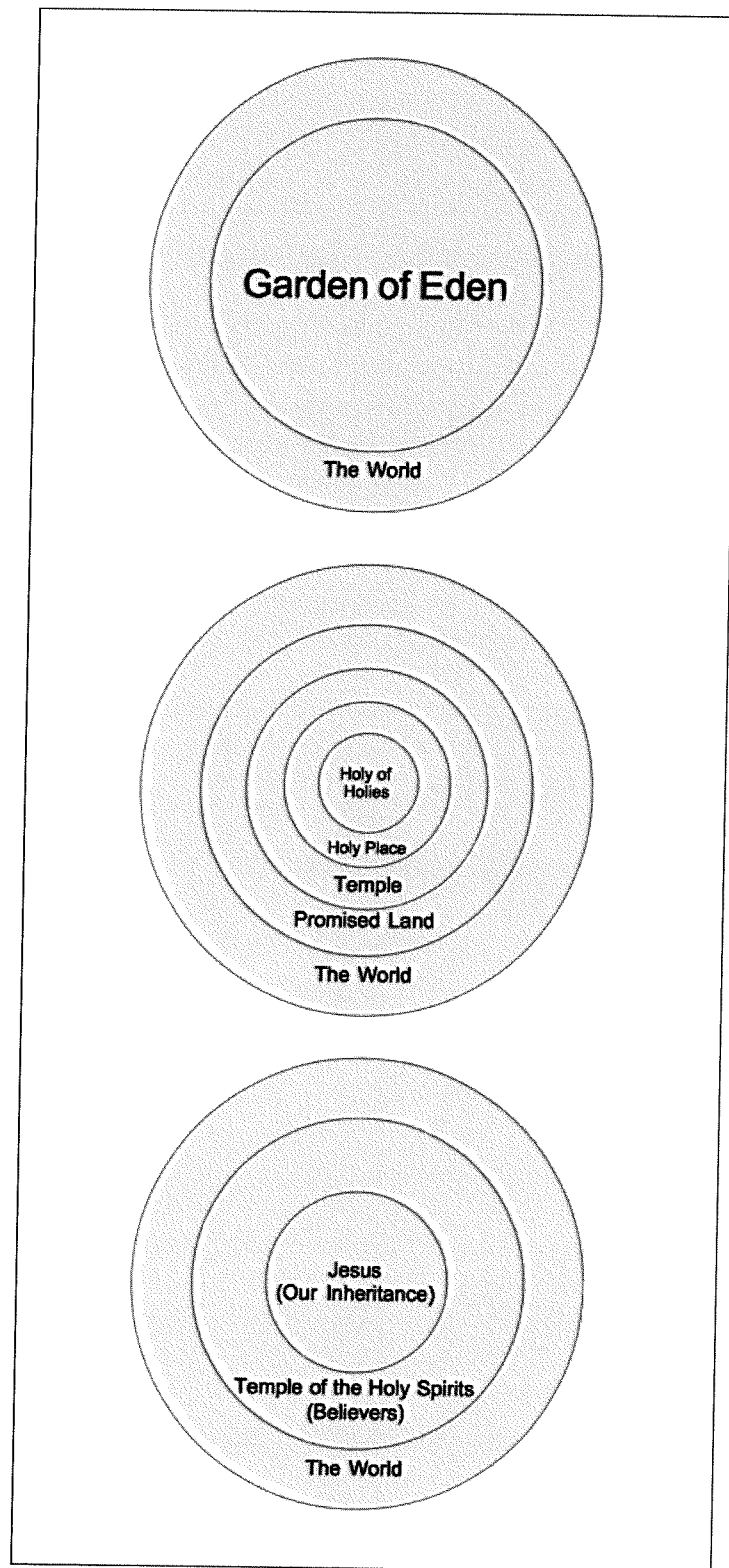


Figure 4.1: Concentric Circles of Holy Spaces

the temple, the holy place is especially holy. Through the holy place, there was the holy of holies. Inside the holy of holies, there was the Ark of the Covenant—the throne of God. (See figure 4.1, second set of concentric circles.)

The temple was, upon further revelation, only a type for the ultimate manifestation of holiness—the person of Jesus. Jesus declared in John 2:21 that his body was the true temple. As Jesus fulfilled the true meaning of the temple by reconciling God and His people on the Cross, the layers of concentric circles surrounding the temple were torn open, as symbolized by the curtain of the temple being torn from top to bottom (Mt 27:51).

A new system of holy spaces was introduced at the Cross. In John 14:2-3, Jesus described his crucifixion as “preparing a place” for the disciples. While in the Old Testament the Promised Land was the inheritance for Israel, now Jesus is our inheritance (Eph 1:11, Col 3:24, Heb 9:15).

As a deposit for our inheritance in Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells with, in, and among the believers. (Eph 1:13-14) Consequently, the believers are part of the new concentric circles of holy spaces, as we are now “temples of the Holy Spirit”. (I Cor 6:19). (See figure 4.1, bottom set of concentric circles.)

**Concentric Circles of Holy People** “Holy people” has a much simpler biblical term: “priests.” The hierarchy of priesthood began with the Israelites being the chosen people out of all people in the world. Among the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levites was chosen; within the tribe of Levites, priests came from the house of Aaron. Of all the priests, only one was appointed High Priest. (Figure

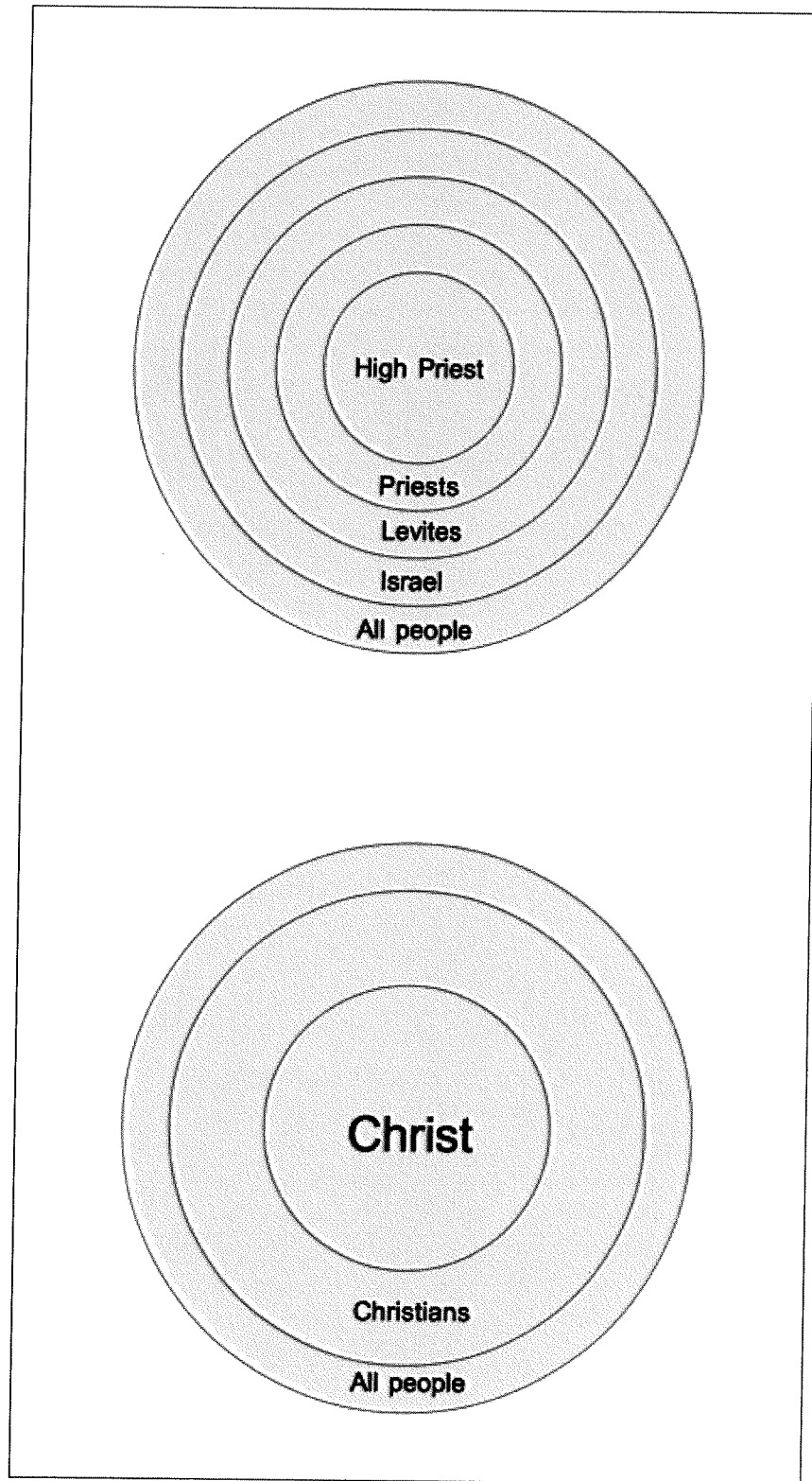


Figure 4.2: Concentric Circles of Holy People

4.2, top set of concentric circles.)

The priesthood of Aaron was replaced by Jesus who was a priest of the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:17 quoting Ps 110:4). In this circle of holiness, Christians are now a royal priesthood (I Pet 2:9). (Figure 4.2, top set of concentric circles.)

**Understanding Sabbath among the Concentric circles of Holiness** Having discussed the concept of concentric circles of holiness with the example of holy spaces and holy people, we can now tackle the category of holy time.

Holy time, more commonly referred to as festivals, were human events that celebrated acts of God. There were three major acts of God - Creation, Redemption, and Restoration. While the focus of this thesis is Sabbath, at this point we have to acknowledge other holy times in the Old Testament. In addition to Sabbath being the holy time that celebrates Creation, there are two more major festivals in the Jewish calendar: Passover and Day of Atonement. The Passover celebrated the redemption and Day of Atonement celebrated the restoration of holiness to Israel— both of these were also fulfilled in Jesus, a fact that is discussed in the book of Hebrews. Jesus was the perfect sinless Passover Lamb (Heb 4:15, cf. Jn 1:29, I Pet 1:19), and Jesus is high priest in the ultimate Day of Atonement (Hebrews chapter 9).

As noted in our discussion of Sabbath-rest in Hebrews (section 2.6.4), there are two layers of Sabbath: an eternal Sabbath was installed on the seventh day of creation. In the fourth commandment, the Israelites were commanded to

emulate this eternal Sabbath by following a temporal cyclical Sabbath. In the New Testament, the temporal Sabbath was revealed to be a “shadow” of the eternal Sabbath-rest which now, through Christ, we have an invitation to enter.

Therefore with Christ being the eternal holy time, the earthly Passovers, the Days of Atonement as well as temporal Sabbaths had all been fulfilled. However, as the gospel has not been preached to the ends of the earth, there are many who have yet to enter the eternal holy Sabbath.

#### **4.2.2 Applications of the concentric Circles of Holiness**

In addition of helping us understand how the symbols of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament, the concept of concentric circles of holiness can be a tool in strategizing our Sabbath practices as well as our social engagement.

#### **Avoiding Legalism**

In practicing Sabbath or other acts of piety, we are prone to turn our zeal into legalism. It would help to ask the question: “Which circle of holiness are we operating in?”

Let me quote an example from Marva Dawn<sup>3</sup> to explain. Dawn who is a musician and a teacher, was asked by her students: “Is it work to play music on a sabbath?” or similarly “Is it work to for a preacher to preach on a sabbath?”.

Dawn’s answer was that for her, teaching a class or playing music is “utter

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3. Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting Embracing, Feasting* (255 Jefferson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49593: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 81.

delight” and “the setting for a new experience of the Holy Spirit’s empowering.” Therefore these activities should not be considered work. However, she would not be preparing her class or practicing her craft on Sabbath. Doing the homework before Sabbath is work necessary for the Holy Spirit to bring forth His empowerment on Sabbath. She would be sure to complete these works before Sabbath began.

If we apply concentric circle thinking to Dawn’s case, the activities of practicing her music, studying and preparing for her classes, outlining her sermons, etc. were activities in an outer circle. Eventhough all these activities were doubtlessly done for the glory of God, and they all exhibited the gifts of the Spirit, they did not enter into the inner circle of Sabbath. Sabbath was a time when God the Holy Spirit was directly present and therefore especially holy.

On the other hand, if we categorically define the act of playing music as either work or not work, we will be ignoring the context of the action and falling into the trap of legalism.

#### **4.2.3 Defining Sabbath in Various Concentric Layers**

Biblical concepts are often difficult to understand, especially to outsiders. The question “Who was Jesus?” has produced numerous answers throughout history. In Matthew 16:13-16, Jesus took the disciples to Caesarea Philippi, far away from the influence of Jerusalem, to ask them specifically “Who do YOU say I am?” so that the disciples could form an answer independent of the opinions of other people. The outer circles’ view of Jesus— “John the Baptist, Elijah,

Jeremiah, or one of the prophets”— are all partially true. However, only the inner circle of disciples came up with the full answer, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

**Social Engagement** Concentric circle thinking is also important in establishing a theology for social engagement. On a conceptual level, when Christian communities discuss social engagement, they often are prone to a dualistic worldview, a fallacy that was pointed out by Bishop Hwa Yung.<sup>4</sup>

Here we represent our social engagement in terms of concentric circles: with Christ in the center, Christians and the Church being the intermediate circle, and the secular world as the outside circle. By portraying our social engagement in concentric circles instead of parallel lines, we affirm what Francis Schaeffer famously declared: “He is here and He is not silent.” We also remind ourselves that we are the connective layer between Christ and the world. Our actions should be to bring people from the outside circle into the center circle in one direction, and to bring blessings from God to the outside world in the other direction.

On a practical level, when we are engaging in public affairs, we often have to decide whether to collaborate with communities of various religious / philosophical affiliations. In cases like these, we need to be aware of what the principles are at each level of the concentric circle. For example: when we are advocating reasonable work hours for factory workers in China, we are

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4. Hwa Yung, *Bribery and Corruption: Biblical Reflections and Case Studies for the Marketplace in Asia* (7 Eng Kong Terrace, Singapore, 598979: Gracewoks Private Limited, 2010), 7-10.



advocating a policy that is closely aligned with Sabbath principles. However, the idea of Sabbath (an “inner circle” idea) is foreign to a Chinese audience.

Therefore we need to invoke “outer circle” ideas, for example: “Long working hours harm workers’ health.” or “Long working hours infringe upon Chinese family relationships.”. In the latter case, we can collaborate with Confucian thinking, which also regards family relationships as its core doctrine.

**Moving People towards the Center** Drawing sets of concentric circles gives us a mental picture of where people are, and more importantly allows us to draw a path that leads from the outer circles into the center.

As believers, we look towards the center from viewpoints of the inner circle: for example, we practice Sabbath with certain acts of piety. However, for someone in the outer circles, these activities are confusing. In order to bring people toward the center, we are to present them with concepts and ideas that are operative in the outer circles. Only after people have moved into the inner circles can we then present them with inner circle ideas and eventually lead them to Christ in the center.

The Queen of Sheba quite literally walked such a path. She received reports of Israel’s wealth and prosperity from her own country. She was attracted to travel to Solomon. When she questioned Solomon, she was impressed not only with his wealth but also with his wisdom. Eventually, she praised the Lord for all she saw.

In the New Testament, most people who encountered Jesus did not see

Jesus as the Son of God. In fact no one, except the prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna, understood His identity when they first encountered Jesus. Many approached Jesus by looking at him as a healer. Others approached Jesus as a political leader. The true identity of Jesus was only revealed to the inner circle towards the end of His earthly mission.

In a modern context, consider Christians interacting with environmentalists. Christians agree with environmentalists in protecting the environment and should collaborate in doing so. As we draw a path from the outer circles toward the center, we take the concept “protecting the environment” and add to its meaning “This world was created by God and belongs to God and we are stewards of His creation.”

Therefore, as we bring Sabbath from the inner circle to the outer circle, and from ancient society to modern society, we would expect that the vocabularies and the practices of Sabbath to undergo dramatic changes. The key is for these outer circle concepts and ideas to attract and motivate people to move toward the inner circle.

While non-believers do not understand the true meanings of Sabbath, their acts of rest are still blessed provisions of God. Sabbath has many levels and manifestations. In the center, it manifests as the Lord’s sovereign providence. Among Christians, it manifests in our total reliance on God’s provision in our hearts and our acts of worship externally. Among non-believers, Sabbath can still be celebrated, although imperfectly, as non-believers are also under God’s provision.

### **4.3 Sabbath is a Paradigm Shift**

Sabbath changes more than one day out of every seven days. Instead, all seven days are changed by Sabbath as the rhythm of the seven day cycle gives meaning to the other six days as preparation of the seventh day. Similarly, Sabbath does not only involve the believer, but instead changes the entire society. Behind the excuse “we cannot afford Sabbath” is a misconception that Sabbath is subtracting from the resources of life. Instead Sabbath is like yeast that is working through the entire dough (Mt 13:33). In modern language, Sabbath is a paradigm shift. To practice Sabbath, we not only have to act differently on one day of the week, but we need to approach our work differently, evaluate our works differently, and give work a different meaning, on all seven days of the week.

#### **4.3.1 Communicating the Paradigm Shift in Secular Languages**

To communicate with business people to implement Sabbath, we must use language that is well-defined and non-religious. Here I summarize the paradigm shift into two motivational principles: why you should change, and four practical principles: how to change.

#### **4.3.2 Two Motivational Principles**

In section 2.1, we noticed that there are two meanings behind the keeping of Sabbath: remembering the Creation and remembering the Exodus. The two

motivational principles correspond to Genesis and Exodus respectively.

The first motivational principle is “Remember that we are living systems, therefore we need rest to stay healthy.” This principle corresponds to the Creation account. God created human beings as living beings. Recognizing that we are living organic beings naturally brings about the recognition that we need to rest. All organisms have natural cycles of action and rest.

Douglas Hall extended the living system thinking with a logical jump which recognizes that not only individual organisms are living creatures, but collectively the ecosystems they form also are living systems.<sup>5</sup> This means that our families, businesses, churches, governments, and our communities are all living systems. If we apply this logical jump to the idea of rest, we realize that corporations, organizations, and society also need rest. This concept was represented biblically by the resting of land in Sabbath years. In an agrarian society, land needs rest. In an industrial / commercial society, our factories, businesses and corporations also need rest. This principle will be expanded upon in section 4.4.

The second motivational principle comes from the meaning of Sabbath in the Exodus: “Remember that we are free, therefore we should bring freedom to others.” Sabbath celebrated Israel’s liberation from slavery in Egypt. Both the fourth commandment and other Sabbath regulations were detailed about treatment of slaves. In the fourth commandment, slaves were explicitly required

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5. Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat and The Toaster* (199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene OR 97401: Wipf / Stock Publishers, 2010).

to be included in their masters' Sabbath rests. If the regulations in Leviticus 25 were implemented (see section 2.4), the Israelites should have a society in which long term poverty and subsequent slavery can be avoided.

The theme of freedom was not lost in the New Testament. Jesus's Nazareth Manifesto was built upon the theme of Jubilee and freedom. His ultimate act of sacrifice on the Cross allowed believers to enter the ultimate Sabbath (Hebrews 4) and granted them ultimate freedom—the freedom from the guilt of sin.

Today, Christians continue to celebrate their freedom on Sabbath through acts of worship. When we recognize that freedom extends beyond “spiritual freedom,” we can re-introduce Sabbath as enhancer of economics freedom in a manner similar to the way that Mosaic Sabbath regulations protected the economic freedom of the Israelites. Section 4.5 will further explore how biblical concepts of Sabbath and freedom interact with secular concepts of freedom.

### **4.3.3 Four Practical Principles**

We have addressed the question “Why we should be applying Sabbath in our modern day?” with the two motivational principles. Now we move to “How to apply Sabbath in our modern day?” I call the answers to the question of “how to apply Sabbath?” the practical principles of Sabbath.

These practical principles need to be applicable across a wide range of industries; thus they need to be flexible and non-legalistic. Obviously, there can be many such principles, but limiting the number of these principles makes

them easier to articulate. Therefore I limit the number of practical principles to four. These four practical principles are listed here and will be further developed in future sections.

- Be content (section 4.6)
- Let your debt be paid (section 4.7)
- Value community over commodities (section 4.8)
- Metrics you use should serve your mission (section 4.9)

While the two motivational principles capture the Genesis and Exodus aspects of Sabbath respectively, the four practical principles capture other important theological meanings of Sabbath.

First and foremost, Sabbath is about having faith in God, to cease our own work and trust in God's provision. The concept of faith is captured in the first practical principle: "Be content."

Second, Sabbath is about rest. This is captured in the second practical principle: "Let your debt be paid." As living systems work, they not only produce the object of their work, but they also produce side effects. When the undesirable side effects accumulate, they can become debts that burden down the system. In the case of biological animals, using more familiar terms, those side effects manifest themselves as tiredness. Rest is when we stop the work and allow the living systems to naturally repay the debts and remove the accumulated side effects.

Sabbath commandments were supposed to apply to “your male or female servant, or your animals, or any foreigner residing in your towns.” This extension of Sabbath from ourselves to those around us is captured by the practical principle: “Value community over commodities.”

Sabbath regulations in Leviticus 25 repeatedly remind us that “the land is mine” and “the Israelites belong to me.” All we have, including all our resources and even our own beings, belong to the Lord. We are stewards, not owners, of our resources. As stewards, we utilize our resources to serve God’s purposes. The principle “Metrics should serve mission” capture the idea of stewardship.

#### **4.4 Living Systems**

Sabbath was the high point in Creation. In John Walton’s interpretation, Sabbath is when God finished his cosmic temple and moved in to take control. For humanity, keeping Sabbath is therefore giving up our control and letting God be in control instead. A traditional interpretation of Sabbath appeals to our need to follow God’s ordained cycle of work and rest. In either case, we are to learn our place in creation.

Humanity’s place in creation was defined in the Cultural Mandate (Gen 1:27-28). We are to “rule over” creation as God’s image bearers. That is, we are to manage Creation on behalf of God. In order to do that, we need to understand and follow the nature of God’s creation.

Following Doug Hall’s living system thinking, we need to recognize that what we are managing are not simple mechanical systems but complex living

systems. In order to understand Sabbath in this context, we need to therefore:

- Study the nature of the created world as revealed in Genesis 1 and the rest of scripture
- Interpret the meaning of rest with the understanding gleaned from above

#### **4.4.1 Modeling Creation from Genesis Narrative**

The observations listed below are usually categorized as “general revelation” and therefore should be comprehensible by a general secular audience. Nevertheless, when these observations are applied to the management of living systems, they can be translated into applicable principles like the four practical principles proposed in this thesis.

#### **Life is Glorious**

In the creation story, God declared seven times that creation is “good” or “very good.” Life itself is valuable, good, beautiful, and glorious.

Jesus uses nature as a teaching tool: “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.” (Mt 6:28-29)

By looking at a flower, Jesus pointed out that God’s creation is infinitely more glorious than human creation. King Solomon was the one of the wealthiest people in the entire history of humanity. His splendor represented the best of



human creation. Yet it cannot compare in beauty to a simple common flower.

God creates life and he gives anything that is alive its intrinsic God-given glory. A flower is intrinsically glorious, because it is created by God. A simple flower contains more glory than what humans can create.

### **Life is Complex**

With life's glory also comes its complexity. Life is complex. In reading the Creation Narrative, one cannot help but notice the orderliness on one hand and the complexity on the other hand. In simple phrases like "each according to its kind," we are reminded how many species of living creatures are created by God.

Modern scientific discoveries also attest to the complexity of living creatures. We used to believe that single cell organisms are simple. Now that we understand their protein and DNA structure, we realize even single cell organisms are incredibly complex.

Not only living organisms are complex, their environments and interactions are complex too. I have already argued that in the biblical concept of "land" includes the understanding that land is alive. Both natural science and social sciences also confirm that collections of living being (e.g. ecosystems, societies, governments, stock markets, etc.) behave in a highly complex manner.

## **Each Object of Creation Has a Purpose**

John Walton proposed that the acts of creation in Genesis chapter 1 were “functional creation” instead of “material creation”. Naturally, in his interpretation, it is axiomatic that each object of creation has its purpose. Even if one does not subscribe to Walton’s interpretation, one can still observe the existence of purpose in each living creature through the Genesis narrative.

The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is “What is the chief end of man?” In asking this question, the Shorter Catechism already assumed that human life has purpose. While non-believers disagree that “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”, the quest for purpose in one’s life is a good interface between believers and non-believers.

### **4.4.2 Interpreting Rest in Living Systems**

We all understand that living creatures need rest. We understand how an animal rests. However, when we extend the idea of live creatures to living systems, we need to re-interpret the concept of rest. Leviticus 25 provided two examples of extending the concept of rest from covering individual living creatures to covering collective living systems. In a Sabbath year, the land was supposed to rest, and we understand how furrowing the land was equivalent to rest. In the Year of Jubilee, the concept of rest was extended to forgiving debts and redeeming properties.

Now the challenge is to extend the concept of rest to a modern economy

that operates twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. For example: “How does a bank rest?” It is important to note that the question is not “How do the employees of a bank rest?” In answer to that question, we already have systems that allow employees to rest in shifts while a bank operates continuously. What we are interested in discussing here is how a bank as an institution can rest.

To understand “what is rest”, it is helpful to consider the condition of lack of rest. Lack of rest in living creatures is a state that is unsustainable and unbalanced. Rest restores balance into an organism. Another way to look at this imbalance is to understand it as an accumulation of debts. A biological example of such debts can be seen in a process where intense exercise creates an oxygen debt in an athlete’s body. During intense exercise, a complex series of chemical changes occur in the athlete’s muscles and blood stream. After exercise, oxygen consumption remains elevated to recover from these chemical imbalances. The extra oxygen required was commonly referred to as oxygen debt.

Understanding rest as the restoration of balance or the repayment of debts fits well with Leviticus 25’s examples of letting land rest (Sabbath Year), and letting society rest (Year of Jubilee). And it is applicable to living systems of all scales, i.e. repayment of debt is a concept that is applicable to both individuals and institutions.

The concept of debt also relates to our other motivational principle—freedom. One that is in debt is not free. The ultimate practice of Sabbath is to be freed by Jesus from the debt of our sins, thereby escaping death and entering into eternal life.

#### **4.4.3 A Healthy Living System is Naturally Productive**

The Creation in Genesis was teeming with life. Food was readily available for humans. A healthy living system is naturally productive. It was when the living system was damaged by the fall that humans obtained their food “by the sweat of your brow.”

Not only is a healthy living system productive, it is also robust. Robustness means it is capable of repairing itself from damages. Previously we discussed rest as rebalancing the system by paying the debts incurred during production. It should be noted that for a healthy living system rebalancing occurs naturally: the best way to rest is to do nothing.

#### **4.5 Freedom**

After examining the Genesis formulation of Sabbath as “Remember that you are a living being,” we come to the Exodus formulation of Sabbath which concerns freedom. When we discuss freedom, we often have to compare and contrast between a biblical concept of freedom and a secular concept of freedom. While making distinctions between biblical freedom and secular freedom is important, so that we do not fall into the trap of using freedom as a license to sin, we also have to understand that the biblical understanding of freedom does have a lot in common with the secular understanding of freedom. Here I will use the common ground between biblical freedom and secular freedom to promote Sabbath in the secular world.

#### **4.5.1 Sabbath and Freedom in Mosaic Context**

From the Decalogue, freedom was intimately related to Sabbath. In Deuteronomy 5:15, Sabbath was linked to Israel's liberation from Egypt. The liberation from Egyptian slavery was the historical backdrop of Sabbath regulations.

In section 2.4, we have pointed out that the sabbatical system of Sabbath day, Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee were focused around freedom. On one hand the sabbatical system celebrated freedom and acknowledged God as the source of their freedom. On the other hand it ensured freedom for future generations by building into their laws safeguards against over-exploitation of the land and of the people.

#### **4.5.2 Freedom in Christ**

Galatians chapter 5 was Apostle Paul's declaration of freedom in Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." (Gal 5:1) It is not a coincidence that the context of this declaration was freedom from Jewish ceremonial regulations. Christ has fulfilled and transformed Old Testament laws, and therefore freedom and Sabbath take on a different and deeper meaning.

In Mosaic times, freedom was primarily put within the context of freedom against slavery. Jesus granted us freedom in a deeper and more universal way: freedom from the bondage of sin. Therefore for Christians, Sabbath should not be a set of rules and regulations, as Paul so strongly declared in Galatians.

Instead, Sabbath should continue to be a celebration of the liberation from sin that was achieved by the Christ's work on the Cross and granted to us by grace alone.

#### **4.5.3 Concentric Circles of Freedom**

To effectively engage in meaningful dialogue between Christian and secular ideas of freedom, we need to bridge the difference between a biblical understanding of freedom and a secular understanding of freedom.

Again, as discussed in section 4.2.3 above, we need to abandon arguments that are based upon a dualistic worldview. We should not think of freedom in purely spiritual terms and make a clear cut distinction between "real" Christian freedom and "false" secular freedom.

From a Christian point of view, ultimate freedom is freedom in Christ and liberation from the bondage of sin. In the secular world, especially among Western democratic societies, freedom is inseparable from political participation. A full dialogue on freedom should go beyond these two limited views.

A discussion of freedom, in many less fortunate contexts, must include basic protection of human lives. The freedom to live is the most basic of all freedoms. The violation of the freedom to live can come from active violence (e.g. wars) or passive deprivation (e.g. famines). It is notable that God first introduced Sabbath to the Israelites not by declaring the commandment, that occurred in Exodus chapter 20, but by preventing them from starvation with manna from heaven (Exodus chapter 16).

The next level up, is the freedom to be productive. In ancient society, economic production depended on land and labor. Sabbath regulations in Leviticus 25, as discussed in section 2.4, provided detailed regulations on both land ownership and slave ownership. Liberation from slavery did not end with leaving Egypt, but was only completed through the successful occupation of the Promised Land. God did not liberate the Israelites from Egypt to become unemployed wanderers, but to become productive and merciful land owners.

In modern society, the means of production are varied. Therefore applying Sabbath principles in modern society involves granting freedom in various ways that are context sensitive. In many societies, education is the key to freedom. Healthcare is another key element in a free society. In developing nations, women are those who need to receive freedom in education and job opportunities. Many development economists suggest availability of credit as another key element in economic freedom.

Based on the above discussion, concentric circle thinking should be employed to allow meaningful discussions between Christian and the outside world over freedom. In section 3.2.1, we have studied Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's "Development as Freedom" and dialogued with the ideas contain therein.

#### **4.6 Be Content**

The first and most immediate application of Sabbath is to be content. Starting with the Israelite's first exposure to Sabbath, the provision of manna, God's instruction was to be content with each day's supply of manna and not to

collect more manna than each person could consume in one day. Exodus 16:18 provides a divine formula for a sustainable economy: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

Paul, in I Timothy chapter 6, provided a long discourse on the virtue of being content and the dangers of being too rich. Notably, being content is directly linked to sound teaching (v.6). Conversely, a love of money leads many away from the faith (v. 10). One’s theological understanding is directly linked to what kinds of economic activities are legitimized. Once again a model of simple living is proposed: “But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.” (v. 8)

#### **4.6.1 Contentment and Health of a Living System**

It should be obvious that without the ability to be content, the health of a living system will quickly fail. Over-eating, over-consuming, over-working are all unhealthy. For every activity we engage in, we should always ask “When is enough enough?”

With the advancement of technologies, the ability to be content becomes ever more important. We now have the capability to rapidly consume a vast amount of natural resources, to rapidly saturate the market with new toys and gadgets, or to win or lose the wealth of nations in a few days. Yet the prevailing doctrine of capitalism is to “maximize profit.” Mahatma Gandhi said, “Live simply so that others may simply live.” I believe that quote needs to be modified



to “Live simply so that we ALL may simply live.”

Being content also means that we should operate within the natural limitations of our living system. A healthy living system is naturally productive. If we carefully observe and understand the system in which we operates, we will know when to stop exploiting its resources and avoid damaging the health of the system.

#### **4.6.2 Contentment and Freedom**

The same choice was put forth by Joshua to the Israelites and by Jesus to his followers: “Serve the gods of this world, or serve the Lord.” On one side was service to Mammon and remain a slave; on the other side was service to the Lord in order to find rest and freedom. As Brueggemann pointed out, the gods of this world are insatiable, and serving them means slavery. Serving the Lord means immitating Him in Sabbath freedom.

Freedom and contentment are also strongly connected in other religions as well as in secular scholarships. In the Chinese context, all three major traditional religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism consider contentment as a virtue that leads to liberation. In section 3.2.1, we examined Amartya Sen’s position regarding freedom and economic development. Increasing wealth does not always increase freedom. Too much focus on wealth or GDP often lead to unfreedom.

Being content also means that we respect other’s freedom and do not infringe upon it. Instead, when we are in a position to do so, we should work to

enhance others' freedom.

#### 4.7 Let Your Debts be Paid

In American corporations, Milton Friedman's shareholder value theory is more than a theory: it is a doctrine. For public companies, the shareholders can and will bring forth lawsuits when the leadership do not maximize the financial gains of the shareholders. Given that the social responsibility of a corporation is to maximize profit, how can we teach corporations to be content?

I believe we can make our case for contentment through Friedman's own definition of his doctrine: "There is one and only one social responsibility of business— to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits *so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.*"<sup>6</sup> Engaging in open and free competition implies that a corporation should be limited from damaging others' ability to function in the market. If a corporation is overly engaged in profit making to the point of damaging its competitors, its employees, or its natural resources, etc., we can claim that it has incurred debts against those it offended. Such debts, although often not calculable in monetary values, should count against the profit that the corporation is trying to maximize.

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6. Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," *The New York Times Magazine*, 1970, emphasis added.

#### **4.7.1 Debt Paying and Living Systems**

In section 4.4.2, we have already linked the concept of debts and the organic nature of living systems. When an living entity, either an individual or a corporation, works, it will produce the desired effects of its work, but it will also produce side effects. When undesirable side effects accumulate, they become debts. These debts may be tangible or intangible, they may act against the living entity itself or act against other entities in its environment. If these side effects accumulate excessively, or when the debts are unpaid, the living entity will collapse, often damaging others around it. Therefore both individuals and corporations have to actively monitor the debts they are incurring and pay their debts.

Notice that I have named this principle in a divine passive form— “Let your debts be paid” instead of “pPay your debts.” This is to indicate that often the debts cannot be paid by the debtor. Instead the debts need to be paid by letting the living system heal itself— in other words let the system rest.

#### **4.7.2 Debt Paying and Freedom**

Both the biblical and secular systems agree that those who are in debt are not free. Here we are extending the concept of debt to cover non-monetary aspects of our lives. If we consider Amartya Sen’s notion that freedom is the means and the end of economic development, we can add yet another dimension to the concept of debt. Depriving one of certain freedoms is incurring debt

against the person. In the west, where freedom is often assumed, the relation between freedom and debt may be quite obvious. However, in many parts of the world, especially when it comes to female members of societies, such a concept can be highly motivating. If a school educates a boy but denies a girl the same education, the school owes the girl her future opportunities.

#### **4.8 Value Community Over Commodities**

While being content and paying debts concern the means of Sabbath living, the other two practical principles focus on its purposes. Brueggemann repeatedly emphasized that Sabbath needs to be in a covenant community.<sup>7</sup> While the secular world may not understand covenants, they still appreciate the importance of community.

##### **4.8.1 Community and Living Systems**

Communities are living systems. As living beings, communities require commodities to be healthy. A community that is lacking in basic commodities will fall apart. However, in order to have a healthy community, we not only need to have the commodities being present, but the commodities need to be distributed and utilized properly. In 2008, The French government commissioned three prestigious economists to conduct a study that was published in *Mismeasuring Our Lives*<sup>8</sup>. The motivation behind that study was that many countries, including

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7. Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

8. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up* (38 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013, USA.: The New Press, 2010).

France, were experiencing a decline in the quality of life of their citizens, even though the GDP of those countries had been continuously rising. In other words, the supply of commodities, as measured by the GDP, was abundant, yet the community was suffering.

In a society where commodities are valued over community, the rich will become richer and the poor will become poorer, as wealth will provide power, and power will be used to gain more wealth. This story is all too familiar a story in our time. As mentioned in section 1.2.3, such conditions of inequality are what Sabbath was designed to correct.

#### **4.8.2 Community and Freedom**

Brueggemann repeatedly emphasized in his book *Sabbath as Resistance*<sup>9</sup> that Sabbath is to select community over commodity. “Community over Commodity” translates well into our freedom narrative as freedom has to be realized in community. When a few are in control of a large group of people, as in the case of slavery or dictatorship, not only is freedom lost, but community is also broken. First of all, the privileged and the oppressed cease to be one community. In addition the oppressed are often active discouraged or subversively disempowered from being fully engaged in community.

Simply putting a group of people in close proximity to each other does not make them into a community; instead genuine community requires genuine freedom. A modern example of this is the example of Foxconn, mentioned in

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9. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 6-17, 31-35, 59-68.

section 1.1. The workers there did not lack commodity— they were reasonably paid and the factory supplied their daily needs. The factory had dormitories, cafeterias, health clinic, even a swimming pool and a movie theatre on campus. Although there were around one hundred thousand workers on campus, long work hours and suppressive management practices made true community difficult among the workers. An interview with suicide survivor Tian Yu revealed that the feeling of helplessness, loneliness, and isolation was driving her suicide attempt.<sup>10</sup> Feelings of loneliness and isolation were also widely reported by other workers.

#### **4.9 Metrics should serve mission**

After placing an individual or a corporation into their respective communities, the individual and the corporation still need to determine their purposes within the community. Each individual has his or her calling and gifts in life. Each corporation has its core competence, market, and product lines. A healthy community requires a diversity of people, skills, products and services.

##### **4.9.1 Mission, Metrics and Living Systems**

If we consider ourselves and our corporations as living systems, we should focus on the health of our living systems instead of our profit generating capabilities. The health of a living system depends on its interaction with its environment. Each living creature and each species has its purpose in

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10. Jenny Chan, "A Suicide Survivor: The Life of a Chinese Worker," *New Technology, Work and Employment* 28, no. 2 (2013): 84–99.

maintaining the health of the overall ecosystem. Similarly identifying each individual's or each corporation's purpose in the community is the first step in defining and maintaining the health of both the individual and the community.

Metrics are important to understanding the health of a living system. However, individual metrics cannot define or maintain its health. For instance, measuring blood glucose level can determine whether a person has diabetes. In effect, it can only tell how unhealthy a person is, but it is powerless to improve one's health without other treatments. In order to really understand the health of a living system, we need a collection of many metrics. To effectively define and monitor the health of a living system, we need to first understand its mission, and then select the collection of metrics that supports that mission.

#### **4.9.2 Mission, Metrics and Freedom**

The ability to set one's mission in life may be taken for granted in the free world. We need to be reminded that an integral part of freedom is for every one in a community to have a voice in determining what the community values. Sadly, in many parts of the world there are still communities where a small group of leaders or religious elders determine what it means to be free for the rest of the people. If we are to extend our freedom to liberate the oppressed, the result of the liberation should include the freedom for the liberated to choose their own missions in life and in business.

On a global scale, an example of setting the metrics of a system without allowing the parties involved to set their missions is the International Monetary

Fund (IMF). In his book, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz described how IMF had failed in stabilizing economies that were in crisis.<sup>11</sup> The IMF requires the countries receiving aids to reduce deficits, raise taxes, and open their capital markets. Working on the basis that economic crises were created largely by government intervention, the IMF pushed for market liberalization in all countries in economic crisis. While government intervention was the problem in some cases, in many other cases local economic conditions and industries simply cannot survive opening the market for global competition; as a result the IMF was doing more harm than good. Similar observations were also made by economist Jeffrey Sachs<sup>12</sup>. Countries need IMF assistance for various reasons. The terms of the loans given to these countries should therefore reflect their specific circumstances. Having a country agree to a pre-determined economic agenda before assessing the specific needs of the country is a case of putting metrics before mission.

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11. Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110: W. Norton / Company, 2003), chapter 8.

12. Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (315 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014: Penguin Books, 2015), location 1862, Kindle.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **APPLICATION OF SABBATH IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE**

After articulating the theology of Sabbath into the two motivational principles and four practical principles, we are ready to suggest applications for these principles.

The applications are organized into three layers: personal applications, institutional applications, and social applications. Since there are a number of diversified ideas presented in this chapter, they are summarized in table 5.1.

#### **5.1 Personal Applications**

In this section, we are going to discuss how individuals can apply Sabbath principles in their lives. The primary audience here are believers who work in secular businesses. However most of the discussions are equally applicable to non-believers who find wisdom in Sabbath practices. Hopefully their appreciations toward Sabbath wisdom will turn into appreciations towards the Lord of Sabbath. Finally, throughout our discussions, we will interject with discussion of how the church community can support individuals in their efforts in practicing Sabbath.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Sabbath Principles</b>
5.1.1	Sabbath as a Spiritual Disciple	Christian	Community
5.1.2	Getting Off the Grid	General	Rest
5.1.2	Media Fast	General	Rest
5.1.3	Sabaticals and Career Breaks	Professionals	Rest, Content
5.1.3	Careers of Meaning	General	Mission
5.2.1	Applying Sabbath as Sustainable Human Resource Management	Business Leaders	Debts, Community
5.2.2	Applying Sabbath as a Paradigm to Grow a Company	Business Leaders	All
5.3.1	Identify the Oppressors	Theologians	All
5.3.2	Direct Teaching on Pulpit	Church Leaders	All
5.3.2	Avoiding the Pitfalls in Our Churches	Church Leaders	Community, Mission
5.3.2	Develop Leaders	Church Leaders	Mission
5.3.2	Teach History	Church Leaders, Business Leaders	Mission

Table 5.1: Summary of ideas in chapter 5

### 5.1.1 Sabbath as a Spiritual Discipline

While this thesis focus on applying Sabbath to the secular world, it is worth beginning our discussion with Christians.

#### **Weekly Worship**

The most direct way for Christians to keep Sabbath is to reserve one day a week for worship. While this concept is simple enough, there are still many pitfalls along the way.

**Attending Church is not always Sabbath** Just showing up at church on Sunday is not equal to practising Sabbath. For many who actively serve in church, we often find Sunday far less than restful. We can take a lesson from Marva Dawn, which we already quoted in section 4.2.2, to make all preparations on the days before Sabbath so that we can enjoy Sabbath to the fullest.

**Sabbath is to be practised in community** True practice of Sabbath is always community center. While it is important to have personal time with the Lord, Sabbath is a celebration. To quote Dawn again, Sabbath is “Feasting”.

**Sabbath is to be extended to the needy** The natural progression of understanding and practising Sabbath within community is to ask “who is in our community?” Remember that the Sabbath commandment has always included everyone in the Sabbath-keeping community: “male and female servants” should have their Sabbath.

Our current economic reality, however, have made Sabbath a luxury many of the less fortunate cannot afford. Churches therefore should be diligent in outreaching to those who need Sabbath.

In Appendix A.1, I will present a case study of the “Service Industry Workers Worship Service” by Boston Chinese Evangelical Church - an effort by a Church in Boston Chinatown that brought Sabbath to those who could not come to church on Sunday.

### **5.1.2 Practicing Sabbath with Digital Technology**

Over-exposure to digital technology is a phenomemon that plague both Christians and non-Chritians. Over digitized workers suffer not only spiritually, but also have damages in their families relationships, psychological, and physical health. In this area, there is much synergy between Christian Sabbath practices and secular work-life balance movement.

#### **Getting Off the Grid**

Being digitally connected to work beyond regular work hours is now common place. According to a Gallup poll in 2014, 96 percent of all full-time U.S. workers have access to a computer, smartphone, or tablet. Two-thirds of American workers say the amount of work they accomplish outside of work hours has increased “a little” to “a lot” due to mobile technology over the last decade. Slightly more than one-third (36%) say they frequently connect with work outside of office hours. That percentage roughly match the 33% of full-time

workers who say their employer expects them to check email and stay in touch remotely after the business day ends.<sup>1</sup>

This make having full and complete rest from work difficult. Fortunately, there are also movements to the contrary. France in 2014 and Germany in 2015 have considered banning work emails after 6 pm. Before national policy discussions take place, some individual companies, for example Volkswagen, have already limited digital communications outside of work hours.

As part of applying Sabbath principles, I think having 24 continuous hours once a week of being “off the grid” is healthy and reasonable. For those who’s employer expects them to be connected constantly, these are a few ideas that can help them convince their bosses:

**Get off the grid responsibly** Tell your employer and your co-workers when you are going to be offline. Make arrangements for contacts in case of “absolute emergency”. If your work is critical, arrange for others to be your backup. Do not “just disappear”. It is good to have Sabbath, but remember that it took the other six days to prepare for one day of Sabbath.

**Teamwork, Knowledge Transfer, and Disaster Recovery** On the surface, having employee disconnect once a week may increase cost. In reality such disciplines often make the company stronger. For example when senior employees regularly get away from work, they need to train others on the team

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1. [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com), “Most U.S. Workers See Upside to Staying Connected to Work,” accessed 07-June-2015, 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/168794/workers-upside-staying-connected-work.aspx>.

to handle the work load when they are away. This become an invaluable opportunity for knowledge transfer. Junior employees now have the opportunities to learn the skills of the senior employees.

A well organized company need to identify critical business processes and prepare disaster recovery plans to ensure the survival of the company in case these critical processes are disrupted. There may be a power outage or snow storm, or a medical emergency to a critical decision maker. These disaster recovery plans need to be understood by all, and exercised regularly. The most common example of exercising such plans are fire drills. Having the discipline for allowing employees, including critical employees, to be disconnected, serves well as mini fire drills to exercise and evaluate a company's disaster recovery plan.

To the contray, if a person, be it an employee or a decision maker, is always online and available, others on the team will consciously or unconsciously develop a dependency on that person. That person may become too powerful, or he/she may become a single point of failure in the team's business process.

I have personally witnessed more than once such a process played out in a company. Usually there is a person who is in charge of the IT infrastructure. That person carries a pager/cell phone and is on call 24/7 whenever the server breaks down. Gradually that person becomes the only one in the company who understand the IT infrastructure and he may hold the company hostage because if he quits, the company would have to rebuild their entire IT infrastructure on

an emergency basis. In fact one of my friend were “empowered” in such a way that one day he walked into his boss’s office and said, “you either double my salary on the spot or I’ll quit. If I quit, your company will be shut down for weeks. I am quite sure that I can find another job before you can find another IT manager who understands the system the way I do.” Obviously, I am not condoning my friend’s threatening his boss. However this example demonstrate that an employee who is available 24/7 may not be the most loyal employee. To the contrary, he or she may be the most dangerous employee who can bring down a company.

### **Media Fast**

In addition to making a restless work cycle, digital technologies also create a multitude entertainment channels. As opposed to work, entertainments are designed to be addictive. While the advertisers would like to have us think of electronic entertainment as “rest”. Over stimulation of our senses is the opposite to physical rest and being exposed to consumerism and materialism is the opposite of spiritual rest.

Because of the addictive nature of entertainment, a longer period of abstinence will be needed to counteract its effects. A media fast can be the tool to achieve restful restoration of our physical, social, and spiritual health. Again these are practices that some in the secular world are already embracing.<sup>2</sup>

Christians can consider them as allies in the struggle against the dominating

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2. “Media Fast: A Strategy for Self-Reflection and Growth,” accessed 08-June-2015, <http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/resources/parents/mediafast.pdf>.

power of consumerism.

**How churches can help** The effective practice of media fasting again should involve both community and personal freedom. For many who are mildly or heavily addicted to digital media, abstaining from media is stressful process. A community can provide mutual support for this process. Genuine human contacts are very effective replacement for electronics messages. Churches are therefore very good environment to provide support for media fasting. Youth group members can keep each other accountable during a media fast. Churches can also encourage families to media fast together. (I often find that the parents are more deeply addicted to their electronic devices than the children). A very good idea, which I learned from Cambridgeport Baptist Church in Massachussets, is to have families sign up for 40 days of media fast over Lent.

While churches forms effective support groups, they can also be a hinderance. Media fast can become legalistic and can bring resentment. Each person has his or her own weaknesses and preferences. One person may struggle with social media, another may struggle with online gaming. The types of media to abstain from should be voluteered by the individual participants instead of being dictated by “church policy”. There needs to be enough flexibility in the program so that no one feel forced.



### 5.1.3 Sabbath in Career Planning

#### Sabbaticals and Career Breaks

Sabbaticals in the academic circles have been a very well established practice of Sabbath in career planning. Outside of academia, the practice is gaining popularity in the corporate world.<sup>3</sup>

Two trends increase the need for sabbatical in the corporate world. First is the rapidly changing technology. Professionals nowadays need to invest a significant amount of time to catch up with new technologies. Often, we need to take longer period of time away from work to focus on acquiring new skills over these technologies. In many cases, being unemployed was involuntary. Automation has driven a lot of workers out of their career. Their jobs simply have been replaced by computers.<sup>4</sup> They are therefore forced into a mandatory “sabbatical”.

Another trend is the increasing mismatch between our education systems and our need for skilled labor. It has become increasingly difficult to hire qualified workers especially in the science and technology field. Therefore, companies are favoring retraining and retaining existing employees. Giving career breaks for employees to study for advancement become more attractive than trying to hire fresh out of school graduates.

In addition to technology, there are many other motivations and logistical

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3. Fortune, “Should companies offer sabbaticals?,” accessed 09-June-2015, 2011, <http://fortune.com/2011/01/03/should-companies-offer-sabbaticals/>.

4. Benjamin Snyder, “These jobs are most likely to be taken by a computer,” accessed 09-June-2015, 2015, <http://fortune.com/2015/05/29/robots-jobs-automation/>.

considerations surrounding taking a career break. One obvious logistical challenge of sabbatical is financial arrangements. Can the worker afford taking time off? Can the worker additionally afford paying tuitions for retraining? Another factor behind taking a career break is family. Many parents struggle with whether to take career breaks for raising children or may be they are considering home schooling. They worry about whether they will be at a disadvantage when they return to the workforce.

**How to plan for a career break** Just like keeping Sabbath days need preparations, taking sabbaticals and career breaks needs planing too. Sumitha Bhandarkar<sup>5</sup> provided a very good set of guidelines to plan for a sabbatical-style career break in the coroporate world. There are five steps in his plan:

1. Choose the Ideal Start Date and Duration for Your Break - make a concrete date which cannot be "I'll do it someday". However allow the plan to change if necessary. Use a life event (a big birthday, getting married, having a baby, etc.) as an motivation. Discuss you idea with your family and friends.
2. Plan your finances - pay off debts before you start and don't allow your break to put you in debt. Plan for your everyday expense as well as for emergencies. Learn to live a more frugal lifestyle.

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5. Sumitha Bhandarkar, "How to Plan a Sabbatical-Style Career Break," accessed 09-June-2015, 2013, <http://lifehacker.com/how-to-plan-a-sabbatical-style-career-break-1241266407>.

3. Plan What You'll Do During Your Break - remember the motivation of your break and plan accordingly.
4. Plan Your Exit Strategy - be responsible at work. As you get close to your date figure out your exit strategy. Do you need to quit for good or can you take a leave of absence? Does your company provide helps? (e.g. tuition reimbursement/extended health care) If you decide to quit, do it responsibly and professionally. Train your replacement. Don't burn your bridges.
5. Go for it! - you may get cold feet. Ease into your lifestyle (e.g. take a few vacation days before leaving for good). Maintain normalcy in the first week, keep a schedule. Keep in touch socially.

**How Churches can help in career planning** As repeatedly emphasized:

Sabbath involves community. In the case of believing communities, churches and para-church ministries can serve pivotal roles in encouraging voluntary career breaks and reducing the pain of involuntary career breaks.

Church communities are excellent venue to give and receive career advices. Church members in similar industries can gather together to discuss trends in their particular industries - "what are the new technologies?", "where can we learn these new technologies?", "who is hiring?"

Those who have enjoyed career breaks can coach others how to plan and execute a sabbatical. Often career breaks are accompanied by career changes. In

these cases, the church community can provide information as well as professional contacts so that the career changers can get a head start in their new careers. Experienced professional can provide valuable advice to new comers.

Family ministries need to interface with career ministries as the two are unseparable in real life. As many career breaks are family related - raise children, home schooling, caring for elderly parent, etc, family ministry can stand hand in hand with workplace ministries to provide support.

Those who suffer involuntary career breaks, a.k.a. unemployments, have more urgent needs. They need help not only in job hunting, but often need help financially and in family relations.

Even if workers are not taking time off to go to school, they can still be in need of new skills and knowledge. Churches can help with such knowledge transfer. A good example is English as a Second Language (ESL) classes provided by immigrant churches.

Finally, do not forget that churches are themselves workplaces. Churches should encourage our own staff (paid or volunteer) to take sabbaticals and to continuously improve our skills and knowledge. In appendix A.2, we will examine how a church can integrate their own ministry needs with career support of its members.

### **Careers of Meaning**

In addition to rapid changes, another factor that we need to consider is the improvement in longevity and vitality of the work force. Previously, a typical

worker get around 20 years of education, work for 40 years, and retire around his or her mid-60s. Now it is not unusual to find people being healthy, active, and capable well into their late 70s or even 80s. As discussed in the previous section, with rapid changes, a worker's skills will become obsolete sooner.

Nowadays, a career may only last 20 years. The net effect of shorter careers and longer lives is that an increasing number of workers will pursue second careers or even third careers.

For many people, both their first and second careers are financially driven. They need to work for money in one way during their first career, and then learn to make money in another line of business in their second career. However, there are also many who are fortunate enough that their first careers have provided enough financial security so that their second careers do not have to be financially focused. Similarly, there are retirees who are healthy and active and find retirement lives unfulfilling.

For those who do not have to work for money, they are free to pursue "careers of meaning". For some, they find meaning in fulfilling personal interests; others may choose volunteering or teaching; some courageous ones may seek overseas humanitarian or missionary work.

Seeking a career of meaning in a way is very similar to arranging for a sabbatical. In a way, we can see careers of meaning as "permanent sabbaticals". In the same way, churches which teach sabbath principles will be of great help. In addition to community support, sound biblical teaching will prompt believers in seeking genuine meaning in Christ. Sabbath teaches us to enjoy the presence of

God.

A major obstacle to seeking a career of meaning is answering the question, "when is enough enough?" With the values of the world, we are being pushed to "keep up with the Jones" and we seem to never be financially secured to pursue deeper meanings of life. Sadly, in many churches, the "keep up with the Jones" mentality is prevalent. However, when Sabbath is preached faithfully, we learn to put our security in God's provision. We learn to be content and frugal. In His plan, "the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little." (Exodus 16:18)

## **5.2 Institutional Applications**

Sabbath does not only applies to individuals, but also to institutions. In the following discussions we are going to focus on Christians business owners or decision makers who can apply Sabbath principles to better manage their companies and their employees.

In societies where it is acceptable for Christian businesses to identify themselves as such, the difference in policies between a Sabbath honoring business and a regular business can serve as witnessing opportunities. In other societies where the culture is not friendly towards businesses openly providing Christian witness, the policies proposed below represent efforts to manage businesses in a socially responsible and sustainable manner.

### **5.2.1 Applying Sabbath as Sustainable Human Resource Management**

#### **Importance of sustainable human resource management**

“Sustainability” is now a common business buzzword. While Sabbath principles concern with sustainability of both natural resources (e.g. land having rest) and human resources, we will focus particularly on sustainability of human resources because there is already an abundance of scholarships on managing natural resources. However, let me point out the similarity here.

For the sake of discussion, let us assume that a factory owner built a factory that dumped polluted water into a river. An activist came to confront the factory owner, saying “You should install a filtration system which clean the water before dumping it into the river.”

If it were a few generations ago, when the public were not as concerned with environmental issues as today, the factory owner may reply, “Installing a filtration system will become extra-cost for my factor. I will lose business to my competitors. I cannot afford to do that! It is a big river anyway, a little pollution is not going to be too damaging.”

If the same conversation happens today, the factory owner’s rhetoric will most likely be very different. He would feel a moral responsibility to be environmentally conscious. Even if he does not have such a moral burden, he would still be concerned regarding his factory’s public image as an irresponsible polluter, or the possibility of legal liability. Thus is the improved awareness on the management of natural resources.

Let us turn to a similar example with human resources. Let us assume that this time our factory owner hires a number of workers. He works them very hard, make them work overtime consistently. The workers do not have time to nurture their family or build social relations. They burn out a few years later, or their skills become obsolete as new products are introduced. When that happens, the factory owner fires them and hire new workers, or replace their jobs with robots, or outsource their work to a lower wage country.

Sadly, the above example is far from being hypothetical. Examples of such employers are abundant, as I have pointed out in section 1.1. The plights of these workers are also noted by Charles Handy as part of the paradoxes of modern capitalism.<sup>6</sup> In essence, this factor owner is polluting the labor pool. As my former manager exclaimed, “we care about recycling our paper to save some trees, but we treat our workers as disposable.”

This “disposable worker” mentality run opposite to Sabbath principles. Workers become commodity, not community. They are denied the dignity of a living system created by a wonderful Creator. Sabbath has a lot to say about the sustainability of human resources.

### **Who are not enjoying Sabbath**

If Sabbath is the solution to sustainability of human resources, we should begin by asking: “who among us are not enjoying Sabbath?” While there are many who fail to practice Sabbath, two groups on opposite ends of the social

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6. Charles Handy, *The Age of Paradox* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1994).



spectrum are particular vulnerable in this respect. On one end of the spectrum are the low-wage workers who cannot afford to not work seven days a week. On the other end of the spectrum are the high-income over-achiever who refuse to take a break because of their competitive temperament.

**Low wage employees** From a human resource perspective, the low-wage workers need a livable wage to begin the conversation of sustainability. A livable wage needs to be sufficient that they can afford to not work long hours seven days a week. Minimum wage legislation provides a legal minimum but the legal minimum may not be livable. It is hypocritical to provide one day off a week to workers when the wages paid to the workers over the six-day work week is not livable. The workers will simply be forced to take on a second job during their off days to make ends meet. No rest will be achieved.

In addition to a livable wage, there need to be upward mobility. Upward mobility is modern day equivalent of freeing slaves in the Mosaic Sabbath system. Providing upward mobility to workers does not necessarily involve financial benefits. Providing education, including on the job training, will afford occupational freedom. Having one day off per week gives employee time and space to learn and improve their skills. One of my previous managers provided a good benchmark for upward mobility: "If a person works for me for a few years and has not become more employable in the open market, I have failed." A company would love to have employees who stay at their positions out of their own free will instead of employees who are stuck where they are.

Other benefits make huge differences in low wage employees' well being. Medical benefit is essential to the well being of the work force. If possible flexibility in work hours will greatly improve the lives of the employees.

How to motivate the company to provide such benefits to their low wage employees? Employee loyalty is a good motivating factor. Not providing good benefits to employees prompts employees either to decrease productivity (e.g. those without medical coverage will get sick and miss work) or to look for other employment opportunities. The myth is that low wage employees are easily replaceable because there are a lot of unskilled workers waiting for jobs. The reality is that high turnover rate and disloyal employees are very costly to a company. With high turnover rate, there will be a cost re-training new employees and corresponding drop in productivity and quality of service. Using the hospitality industry as an example, every employee turnover costs the employer between US\$3,000 and \$13,000.<sup>7</sup>

Providing benefits need not be financially burdensome. Not all low wage employees need all the benefits offered. Young people who are looking for work experiences and do not have the burden of family need significantly less benefits than regular employees. Employees with children often will benefit more by having flexible work hours than higher pay. With modern communications and 24/7 operations, offering flexible work hours is not a very burdensome proposition to many companies. Government programs and tax incentives also

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7. April G. Kaplan, Mark S. Hoover, and Paul Seaman, "Employee Assistance and Related Programs: Strategies for Helping Low-Wage Workers," *Sagamore Institute for Policy Research*, 2007,

help relieve financial burdens to employers.

Listening and studying the needs of low wage employees key to effectively managing them. The error is to treat them as a commodity, thinking that they are replaceable or disposable. In fact, they are part of our community that forms more than one third of our workforce.

**High Achieving Workaholics** On the other end of the spectrum are the highly competitive professionals. I personally know many friends in the financial industry who work 80+ hours a week, a few of them more than 100 hours a week. In fact, workaholic attitudes are the norm of the industry.

On the surface, these people are your best employees. They work hard and they make the company a lot of money. However when such behavior becomes the culture, the result can be devastating.

How do we motivate HR decisions that embrace Sabbath and reject such a culture? My suggestion is to convince them through understanding the risk factors involved.

The first risk is the risk of burning out. People make mistakes and people make more devastating mistakes when they are dead tired. We won't trust a pilot to fly a plane without enough sleep, why would we trust a trader with billions of dollars when he doesn't have the spare time to think clearly?

The second risk is the risk of dishonesty. What motivate such people to work so hard? In many cases, the answer is money. (Although I must concede that some work for love of their job.) If money is the prime motivating factor,

and these people are willing to do harm to their family lives and even do harm to their own health, what is there to prevent them from doing harm to the company for their personal gain? We don't have to look too far into recent history to realize that the news headlines are filled with such people ruining companies after companies.

### **Putting Sabbath Principles into HR policies**

To articulate Sabbath principles into human resource policies, we have chosen the concept of sustainability. Companies that are responsible towards sustainability of natural resources are often referred to as "green" companies. Here I propose that companies which are responsible toward sustainable human resources can be labeled "golden" company - in reference to the Golden Rule. In short, a "golden" company is "a company that treats all its employees the way its executives would be treated." The basic principles in a golden company consists of livable wages, upward mobility, rest, work-life balance, and fairness. These principles can be put into policies as follows:

- We pay a fair livable wage to all employees. (livable wage)
- We encourage all employees to have a clear vision of their future career paths. (upward mobility)
- We encourage all employees to continuously improve themselves through education and training. (upward mobility)

- Whenever possible, we will allow flexibility in work schedule – especially in cases of family emergencies. (work-life balance)
- We require every manager to delegate job responsibilities in ways that respect the work-life balance of our employees. (work-life balance)
- We require every employee to take at least one day (24 contiguous hours) off in a week. This time off includes refraining from remote work done through digital communications. (rest)
- Our executives will be well-paid but not excessively paid. (fairness)
- All employees, regardless of rank, are subjected to the same ethical standard. (fairness)

### **5.2.2 Applying Sabbath as a Paradigm to Grow a Company**

Christian business people often ask, “How can I run my business in a way that is glorifying to God?” or “How should a business run by Christians be different from a business run by non-Christians?” There are a few obvious answers: A “Kingdom business” should be honest to their customers. They should promote a joyful attitude. Kingdom businesses should treat their employees as community instead of commodity as described in the previous section.

Running a business consists of more than a good honest attitude and well managed employees. In this section, we are going to implement Sabbath principles as a paradigm to managing and growing a business.

## **Recognize your business as a living community**

Recognizing one's business as a living community has two fold meanings:

1. a business is made up of people;
2. a business operates within a larger ecosystem.

In the previous section, we have already discussed how to manage human resources. Therefore we will focus on the second point. Businesses do not operate in a vacuum. Large corporations are often big enough to impose their will over their business environment. Small businesses, on the other hand, have to gain intimate understanding of the people, community, and business processes that surrounds them. In either case, the health of an individual business is intimately link to the health to the larger ecosystem.

## **Articulate your goals and strategies**

Each business is unique and different and depending on what industry a business is in, it would have its own unique mission. Therefore it is impossible to discuss each business' mission here. However, among businesses with different missions, they often share the same set of goals and strategies, because the processes of running a business are often well defined by its business environment - or what we refer to as its ecosystem.

To understand a business' place in its ecosystem, the best place to start is from within itself. What are the goals of the business? For the majority of

businesses, one of the goals is obviously to make profit. But making profit cannot be the only goal. At least we should ask ourselves, "How much profit is good and fair?" This is especially true for businesses that involve the essentials of life - food, energy, and housing. Excessive profits in these areas will be damaging to society and unethical.

Once we have the answer to the profit question, the next question would be, "do we have to be open seven days a week to attain our goal?" If we are honest with the profit question, the majority of small businesses should be able to afford Sabbath. Larger companies which have a more diversified customer base will need to operate 24/7. In those cases, employees should be arranged into shifts.

Once the profit question is resolved, we can look at other stakeholders. What are the goals for our employees? How do the goals of the business align with the personal goals of individual employees? How about our customers? What are their expectations towards our products/services? Are we serving the right market segments? Are there customers who needs our products but are excluded because of price/accessibility?

Finally, we need to look at the life cycle of the business. At what phase is this business in? Is it growing, steady or declining? How long should this business last anyway? For a small family owned business, will the business be closed when the founder retires? Is there an exit strategy? Alternatively is there a succession plan?

After a business carefully examines its own missions and its goals, it will

understand its place in the corporate ecosystem. Then it will be able to better answer the next questions.

### **Recognize the Complexity**

Humans, by God's design, are highly complex, with many layers of needs and amazing abilities to create, adapt and relate. We cannot expect businesses, which involve a multitude of humans that relate in complex roles of customers, employers, employees, vendors, suppliers, and investors, to be anything but highly complex entities.

Because of this complex nature, we should avoid over-simplification - usually over-simplification come from over emphasizing one parameter. Most of the time the one parameter is profit. In competitive high tech environment, the one parameter may be time-to-market. In service industry, it may be customer satisfaction. In manufacturing, it may be efficiency. In macro-economics, the one parameter is the GDP.<sup>8</sup>

How then can a manager manage a business? I am here borrowing a phrase from "Mismeasuring our lives" by Joseph Stiglitz et. al. We need to examine a "dashboard of indicators". The dashboard needs to be well defined, but flexible. It needs to change periodically to reflect the grow/decline of a business, the changes in external business environment, and changes in technologies and knowledge accumulated. The process of understanding, determining, and changing the dashboard of indicators should involve the full

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8. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up* (38 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013, USA.: The New Press, 2010).



range of stakeholders. Whether someone possess the skills necessary to stay on top of this full range of human and business complexity make the distinction between whether that person is a leader or merely a manager.

### **Avoid the Almighty Number**

Milton Friedman laid down maximization of profit as:

“There is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.”<sup>9</sup>

Controversial as it is, it has become the prevalent doctrine in American business world. Yet it illustrates the fallacy of not recognizing the complexity of a business as discussed above. It runs into the danger of making profit the one almighty number that distract business decision makers from managing the complex matrix of interrelated parameters surrounding a living system of business.

In Marianne Jennings’ “The Seven Sign of Ethical Collapse”, she named the first sign of impending ethical collapse as “Pressure to Maintain Those Numbers”.<sup>10</sup> Jennings pointed out that the pressure to keep up with the sales figures or profit numbers often drives decision makers to unethical actions and

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9. Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 1970,

10. Marianna M. Jennings, *The Seven Sign of Ethical Collapse* (175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010: St. Martins Press, 2006).

eventually to the collapse of the company.

Obviously, the problems described by Jennings fall against Friedman's assert that profit maximization should be engaged "in open and free competition without deception or fraud." Nevertheless, these failures point out that rules and regulations are powerless to prevent people from unethical behaviors - a fact that was clearly articulated by the Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans.

Let us assume for argument's sake that all business decision makers stay within ethical rules, can over-emphasizing the almighty number still bring down a business? The answer is "yes". In his classic work "The Innovator's Dilemma", Clayton Christensen describe how successful profitable companies routinely fail to embrace technologies and innovations that are disruptive in nature.<sup>11</sup> Disruptive innovations often serve a segment of the market that has a lower profit margin than entrenched technologies. Therefore business decision makers, for the sake of maximizing profit, favors entrenched old technologies over new disruptive technologies. As disruptive technologies develop and mature, the companies that embraced the disruptive technology take over the market from the former profitable companies. As Christensen pointed out, the managers did all the right things to maximize their profit, yet at the end their decisions led to the downfall of the companies they managed.

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11. Clayton Christensen, *The Innovators Dilemma* (60 Harvard Way, Boston, Massachusetts 02163: Harvard Business Review Press, 1997).

## **Identify and Pay Your Intangible Debts**

As discussed in section 4.7, businesses, as living systems, accumulates debts as they engage in production. Sabbath is active rest instead of lazy idleness. Businesses should identify their intangible debts and repay them as acts of “rest”. Sometime repaying these debt involve ceasing or slowing down production to allow the business ecosystem to restore itself through its God given organic nature.

Some of the most obvious debts a company owe are to its employees. Beyond the tangible debts, that is their salaries, businesses are consuming the employee’s skill and knowledge. Therefore upkeeping of employee skills is one of the intangible debts.

If the nature of the business involves long or irregular hours, the company is also incurring debts against the employee’s families as work is intruding into family lives. This is especially true with modern digital communications. Mobile devices intrudes into employee’s personal lives and are incurring intangible debts rapidly.

In addition to debts to people, Sabbath also reminds us of debts to “the land” - i.e. to the environment. As there are many well published ways to be environmentally friendly, we will not discuss these aspects here.

Once a business become substantial in its scope and influence, it also has to consider its debts to the market. It can be inadvertantly driving up the cost of certain goods, or it may be changing its consumers behavior. This is especially

true of businesses that introduces new technologies into the market.

## **Value Diversity**

Sabbath is about granting freedom for living systems to grow. A healthy living system should be naturally diverse. It is a common misconception that a successful technology startup is one in which everyone is smart, young, energetic, and preferably ivy-league educated. In my personal experience with technology startups, and through interviewing experienced venture capitalist and entrepreneurs, I have discovered that such companies seldom survive. Hyper-competitive people often cannot work well with each other. They often pursue over-aggressive strategies. To have a stable successful startup, there needs to be seasoned veterans of the field who know how to temper youthful enthusiasm.

On the side of already established companies, the same principle holds true. In “The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse”, Jennings describe examples where companies have lost the freedom to attend to the intangibles,<sup>12</sup> or companies that have lost the diversity to express dissenting opinions,<sup>13</sup> or company that have become a fan club of their CEOs.<sup>14</sup>

In Appendix A.3 and A.4, I will present two companies which are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of their sizes: a software giant (Google) and a small local real estate company. I will examine how Sabbath principles

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12. Jennings, *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, chapter 2.

13. Jennings, *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, chapter 3.

14. Jennings, *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, chapter 4.

have help them grow their companies and manage the complex nature of business.

### **5.3 Changing Society with Sabbath Principles**

Not only do individuals and businesses need to practice Sabbath, our society needs to change to be more Sabbath friendly. When more and more individuals practice Sabbath and more and more businesses adapt Sabbath friendly practices, hopefully society will change. But this is not enough. Because these Sabbath friendly individuals and businesses are fighting an uphill battle against a prevailing philosophy of greed. They need to be equipped on theologic and philosophical level in order to withstand the insatiable restless culture. Who are going to equip them? Their churches. Who are going to equip the churches? The theologians — theologians not only in seminaries, but also theologians in business schools and secular academic centers.

Let me make a comparison: when a student enrolls in a biology class and the teacher begins to use evolution to assert that there is no creator, the student has access to materials that counter the teacher's arguments with sound reasons because there are theologians in the field of apologetics who provide such materials. Now consider a student who is walking into business school class which takes maximization of profit as its principle, or a manager who want to change the way his company treats their unskilled employees, or the executives of Chick-fil-A who has to explain why their stores are closed on Sunday; we need to provide them reasonable defenses for their beliefs, their business plans, and

their executive decisions. I hope this thesis provide a starting point, although much more need to be done to promote “apologetics to the business world”.

### **5.3.1 Identify the Oppressors**

As Sabbath applies to both Christians and non-Christians, the oppression of the violation of Sabbath is felt by both believers and non-believers. Being able to identify the oppressors and the mechanism of oppressions will allow Christians to meaningfully engage in conversations with the business world and the political world. By being a prophetic voice in the world, we can find our allies and engaging the changing business practices.

For churches, their prophetic voices can be expressed through teaching on and around the pulpit. This will make the pulpit more relevant to modern situations and more attractive to working people.

For believers in the business world, they should realize that there are many voices in the business world. Some voices are oppressive while others are more sabbath friendly. They can therefore bring their prophetic voices by making allies with sabbath friendly practices.

For believers in democracy societies, they can express their prophetic voices through political processes. Christians are familiar with expressing their voices in the political circles in certain ethical debates like abortion and same-sex marriage. However in terms of business practices and economic development, especially in terms of worker’s welfare, Christians have been largely silent.

## **Oppressors who favor commodity over community**

A central theme of Sabbath is community over commodity. Therefore a key measurement of an organization is whether it favors the development of community.

**Labor Intensive Factories** Obvious oppressors in this regard are industrial systems where the labor force is reduced to commodity, for instance, sweat shops in Asia and other developing countries.

There are between 150 to 200 million migrant workers in China. Because they have moved away from their home towns, they are disconnected with “hukou” (family registry) system. Not only are they separated from their original communities by their migration from rural villages to cities, they are prohibited from forming new communities in their new cities. Since it is extremely difficult to change workers family registries from their villages to the city they work in, most migrate workers have no registry and therefore they will receive no human services - no government health care, no education for their children, and in many instances even no police protection.

In large factories where they provide dormitories and health care for their workers, the factory becomes the only community to which the workers are connected. An example of such factory is Foxconn. Foxconn campus in Shenzhen had dormitories, a health clinic, and even a movie theatre and a swimming pool. Materially the basic necessity of workers were taken care of.

However the factory was a very poor substitute for a true community. Migrant workers were lonely people away from their families. Long work hours and dormitory lives made it very difficult to form friendships.

The labor conditions of Foxconn was put into international highlight during the wave of suicides from 2010 to 2013. In this case, pay was not the most important reason behind the discontent among the workers. In fact, a pay raise of 30% did little to slow the wave of suicides.

China's industrial systems which rely heavily on migrant workers have torn apart many communities. In rural villages, many families have parents who work in the cities, leaving their children behind to be raised by their grandparents. The migrant workers in cities lack basic social services and support systems, making it very difficult for them to find new communities. Overall, it is a prime example of destroying communities for the sake of commodities.

**Technology and Social Media** Technology and social media can enhance a community by enhancing communication. Unfortunately the opposite has often emerged. People can be engrossed in virtual communities and become ineffective in real communities.

In addition to taking time and focus away from traditional community activities, digital media, under the constant pressure of marketing and productization, are also guilty of commoditizing community. Social media activities are constantly scored: our interactions are categorized by the number of "shares", "likes", "tweets", "followers", "friends", etc. Such scores are than



stored in databases, analyzed by marketers, and eventually productized. As a result, simple acts of community building are being intruded by endless data capture and consequent advertising. A simple act of having a conversation over coffee at a neighborhood coffee house now triggers hundreds of data points that generate tens of advertisement, many of which directly intrude into one's conversations via the cell phone.

### **Oppressors who Over-simplify Living Systems**

If we do not recognize that businesses are living systems, we are in danger of not recognizing that businesses and people in businesses need rest. Thus we put ourselves in danger of violating Sabbath.

If we recognized that businesses are living systems, we understand that living systems are inherently complex. A philosophy of maximizing one metric is therefore most likely over-simplifying the nature of the business. Examples of such over-simplification are abundant, a few of them have deep impact on society, listed below.

**Maximization of Shareholder Value** Since Milton Friedman's famous 1970 article on New York Times,<sup>15</sup> much discussions have been raised to validity of Friedman's claim. Nevertheless, maximization of profit has become a dominant paradigm in management.

By reducing a manager's decision to maximizing one parameter, the focus

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15. Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits."

of the manager is pulled to the wrong place. The CEOs are now managers of Wall Street expectations instead of operating the company.<sup>16</sup>

**Maximum efficiency and Taylorism** Instead of maximizing profit, Federic Taylor's scientific management maximize efficiency, especially labor productivity. Introduced in 1880s and 1890s with in manufacturing industry, scientific management seek to maximize efficiency by standardize practices.<sup>17</sup> While scientific management itself has become obsolete in the 1930s, the movement of maximizing efficiency lives on. Today numerous management methodologies focus on maximizing efficiency. It has to be noted that maximize efficiency in and of itself is not in violation of Sabbath principles. However maximizing efficiency by reducing the labor force into a simple parameterized commodity is indeed in violation.

**GDP first thinking and Lee's Thesis** Moving from the institutions of corporations into the institutions of governments, the same pitfall of relying on one (or a few) parameters to manage complex human problems exists. In many cases, the one parameter is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While the GDP is the primary economic measurement, some leading economists are advocating against over-dependence on the GDP as a measurement of economic health.<sup>18</sup>

In the Asian context, the "GDP-first" sentiments are often captured as

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16. Denning, "The Dumbest Idea In The World: Maximizing Shareholder Value."

17. Wikipedia contributors, "Scientific management," accessed 27-August-2015, 2015, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scientific\\_management&oldid=675318277](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Scientific_management&oldid=675318277).

18. Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up*.

discussions surrounding “Lee’s Thesis”. Named after Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore, Lee’s Thesis states democracy hinders economic growth. While we may debate whether democracy is a biblical social system, or whether the statement itself is proven by economic data<sup>19</sup>, we have to see that Lee’s Thesis violates the Sabbath principles by over-simplifying the needs of the people and putting commodity over community.

### **5.3.2 Equipping the Saints**

#### **Direct Teaching on Pulpit**

The most direct and powerful force the church holds is its pulpit. Wonderful teaching materials, books, and sermons have been written about Sabbath. I do not think I need to make more contributions in this area.

In addition to direct teaching, Sabbath ideas and principles can be embedded into other topics and teaching opportunities. Ideas like “value community” or “be content” can find their ways to many sermons, Sunday schools and bible studies. Appendix B.1 provide a specific case of teaching Sabbath in a Sunday school system.

#### **Avoiding the Pitfalls in Our Churches**

Actions speak louder than words. Churches should remember that they too are workplaces. In particular, the principles that we preach and ask our

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19. Carl Henrik Knutsen, “Investigating the Lee thesis: how bad is democracy for Asian economies?,” *European Political Science Review*, 2010,

working Christians to bring to their workplaces, we need to practice them ourselves.

Churches should be content with the bountiful resources our Lord had provided. First and foremost, we should be relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is true Sabbath: to cease our strife and let God be in command.

Before a church become a religious organization, it is first and foremost a community of believers. Not only is a church a community, but its primary function is community building. In this age of the Internet, a believer can easily get weekly sermons of hundreds of the best preachers in the world. In short, sermons of big name preachers are now commoditized. Churches should realize that our function of being content provider is subservient to our function as covenantal community builders. In I Corinthians 4:15, Paul compares the role of teachers (content providers) to the role of a father (covenant relationship): “For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you.” (NLT).

With the understanding that our mission is to build up the covenant community of believers, we should constantly remind ourselves to put our mission before metrics. We usually associate the success of a church with one number: its Sunday attendance. My long time friend Gideon, who is a second generation Baptist minister, shared with me the three “B”s of measuring the success of a church: “Budget”, “Building”, “Baptism”. Three numbers are better than one, but still highly deficient. A church as a community is highly complex,

its mission is multi-faceted. While it is important to reflect upon the effectiveness of a church ministry by looking at a sound collection of metrics, numbers can never adequately describe the true health of a church. We should never let metrics take our focus away from our mission.

### **Develop Leaders**

Because of the complexity inherent in our society, leading a community will always be much more difficult than managing metrics. While managing business metrics can be reduced into a science, leadership will remain an art.

Carrying out the paradigm shift outlined as Sabbath principles will not only teaching but leaders. The believing covenant community is where these leaders can be developed. Churches that have a long history of discipleship training will be influential in the future of Sabbath friendly business.

### **Teach History**

With the prevailing management doctrines outlined in section 5.3.1, it will be difficult for business to continuously practice mission over metrics. Leaders are constantly under pressure to perform to metrics instead of upholding the mission of the organization. A “tribal storyteller” (borrowing the term from Max DePree<sup>20</sup>) is someone who continuously reminds the organization of its mission.

Christ was good at storytelling, so were the prophets. We are constantly reminded of the power of God-inspired missions or visions. We have an

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20. Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019: Random House, Inc, 2004).

abundance of examples of spiritual leaders upholding one's vision despite overwhelming pressure. We should learn to value these story and teach history of our own organization and get into the habit of using history to inspire members to uphold our mission. Once we have these "tribal storyteller", they will be valuable not only inside the our churches but they will become a force in uphold our values in the workplace.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

#### 6.1 Summary

Sabbath is important to modern society. Unfortunately, the vast majority of discussion and scholarship on Sabbath are limited within believing community. Sabbath is a blessed gift from the Lord that was intended not only for the believing community, but for society in general.

In order to bring Sabbath to a secular audience, we need to explain why Sabbath needs to be kept as well as how to put Sabbath principles into daily decision making. Why Sabbath needs to be kept is explained by two motivational principles:

- Remember that we are living systems, therefore we need rest to stay healthy.
- Remember that we are free, therefore we should bring freedom to others.

How to practice Sabbath is articulated by four practical principles:

- Be content
- Let your debt be paid

- Value community over commodities
- Metrics should serve mission

In formulating these principles, I put special care in avoiding religious terminologies. In addition, these principles are formulated to be applicable to both individuals and corporate entities.

The design of these principles allows them to be embedded into various training programs or to be incorporated into business decision processes. Among believing communities, they can be taught directly as Sabbath principles, or they can be incorporated into teachings about stewardship. In the corporate world, they can be introduced as principles of sustainability or as ways to improve innovation.

## **6.2 Future Research**

The most immediate need for further work on this topic is to translate the work for Chinese audiences. As mentioned in the introduction, China is in desperate need of learning about Sabbath. The rapid economic changes in China has already seriously damaged the environment, their communities, and the welfare of the workforce. The people and the land both need rest.

Implementing the principles in this thesis in China goes beyond simple language translations. China is less familiar to Christian ideas than the West — very few Chinese are aware of the examples of how Sabbath has shaped the Jewish community.



Chinese communities are also under much greater pressure from political uncertainties. People are hoarding wealth as a result of fear. Therefore practicing being content, or putting community before commodity require an extra degree of faith than in stable Western democracies.

Nevertheless, Chinese Christian leaders are keenly aware of their need for the message of Sabbath to be preached. Personally, in the occasions in which I discuss my thesis project with Chinese church leaders, the responses were very enthusiastic. In China there is less concern for separating faith from the public life. For example, Chinese Christian business owners can freely introduce their religious belief into the workplace without fearing that it brings inappropriate pressure on the employees. For this reason, I am hopeful that ideas in this thesis can quickly make an impact on the factory floors of Christian owned businesses in China.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **CASE STUDIES**

These cases were chosen to cover both small scale and large scale examples. In modern Western culture, a majority of companies already follow a seven day work-cycle. Therefore, I am going to highlight examples that are innovative: cases that introduce elements of Sabbath that impact workers beyond a seven-day work cycle.

The first two cases are ministry based. The first case is a Chinese church that implemented a worship service around Monday instead of Sunday to disciple service industry workers who could not attend Sunday worship. The second case is that of a church that turned a technology project into a community building ministry.

The other two cases are business cases. In the case of Google, we explore how the “let your debt be paid” concept can be applied to business processes and help promote innovation and mitigate future risks. The fourth case describes an audit of a small independent business using the four practical Sabbath principles. The audit helps the Christian business owner with encouragement for the good work he is already doing, as well as an idea for a new marketing campaign.

## **A.1 Boston Chinese Evangelical Church Service Industry Ministry**

### **A.1.1 Background**

Boston Chinese Evangelical Church (BCEC) is the largest (by membership) Chinese language church in New England. It has Cantonese, English, and Mandarin worship services in both its Chinatown main campus and its satellite campus at Newton, Massachusetts.

Service Industry Ministry operated at its Chinatown campus from January 10, 2007 to March 26, 2012. It was held on Mondays to accommodate service industry workers who could not attend regular Sunday worship services.

### **A.1.2 Formation**

The vision of serving believers who worked in service industries began when Mr. Samuel Wong met with believers who expressed their desperate needs for pastoral care in 2005.

Service began with advertising in a local Chinese newspaper. The first Monday gathering happened on January 10, 2007. Other than the organizers, there were 3 in attendance. With continuing advertising, the attendance, while still quite unsteady, slowly increased.

On August 15, the Service Industry Fellowship was formally established by Pastor Daniel Chan as an official ministry of BCEC. Their Monday gathering officially became a worship service and on that day they had the first of their monthly communion services.

### **A.1.3 Growth and Achievements**

By 2010, the Service Industry Fellowship's weekly attendance had grown to between twenty and thirty, with ten who regularly attended. Given the demands of their jobs, it was very difficult for any individual to consistently attend Monday morning worship. In 2011, their average attendance was 71%, the most committed few had attendance above 90%. Members of the fellowship also began inviting non-believers. Through its five year history, there were five conversions. Four were baptized in BCEC. One moved to New York City, and joined a Mandarin speaking church there.

Among the regular members, the majority were restaurant workers. There were also a manicurist, a household helper, some sales people and hotel workers.

A regular Monday gathering began with Bible classes at ten in the morning. Worship was at eleven o'clock, followed by prayer and sharing at noon. After prayer, they often went out for lunch and occasionally there were leadership training classes in the afternoon.

By 2011, the members of the Service Industry Fellowship had demonstrated strong spiritual growth. A few of them were integrated into the main body of BCEC and began serving with the rest of the congregation in various capacities: e.g. distributing gospel tracks, going on short term mission trips, attending prayer meetings, and helping out with the nursery.

All of the members had demonstrated noticeable spiritual growth. One rejected opportunities with better pay and benefits and willingly stayed in the

hotel work so that she could join the Monday worship. The restaurant workers among them stopped worrying when business was slow. Instead they gave thanks for the extra free time when they could read the Bible, share, and sing.

#### **A.1.4 Termination**

By 2012, a few of the original members had moved to other cities. One of the couples had a baby and could not attend Monday worship because there was no childcare on Monday. Most of them had improved job opportunities and eventually succeeded in landing jobs that allowed them to attend worship services on Sunday. Sunday worship services were much better resourced than Monday worship services. On Sundays there was childcare, a more complete Sunday school curriculum, and better music. Four of them were already attending worship service on Sunday, but would return again on Monday to worship for a second time.

After carefully surveying the members, it was discovered that arrangements could be made for all of the regulars to attend worship on Sunday instead of Monday. It was determined that their spiritual growth would be better served by encouraging them to attend Sunday worship services. Monday Service Industry Fellowship was suspended in April 2012.

#### **A.1.5 Evaluation**

Although Monday worship service was suspended, both Mr. Samuel Wong and Pastor Daniel Chan considered the Service Industry Worker

Fellowship a success. The most important aspect of its success was the spiritual growth of its members. They began with a few people who struggled to find time to attend weekly worship. At the end, the members were willing to serve at church and eager to attend more advanced bible classes. Many of them were willing to sacrifice financially at their jobs to find the time for spiritual growth. In essence, the members of the Service Industry Worker Fellowship, including the new converts, had outgrown the resources that could be provided by the Monday worship service.

In the future, when there is another wave of people who cannot attend Sunday services, BCEC will be better equipped to launch a better, more resourceful Monday worship service.

## **A.2 Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston Internet Ministry**

### **A.2.1 Background**

Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston (CBCGB) is an affluent Chinese church in the suburban town of Lexington, west of Boston. The congregation consists of mostly highly educated professionals. The church is spread over three campuses, Lexington main campus, City Outreach Ministry on Beacon Street in Boston, and Metro-South Campus. In Lexington, there is a Chinese congregation of about one thousand, and an English congregation of about four hundred. City Outreach Ministry and Metro-South are Chinese only. It is my home church.

CBCGB was an early adopter of Internet technology because of its large

college student and young professional population. However by 2012, the web site [www.cbcbg.org](http://www.cbcbg.org) had become outdated. The decision to redo the web site was made by the board of elders.

### **A.2.2 Approach**

The first decision to be made on the project was whether to do the project in house or to hire an outside professional. Budget was of little concern here; therefore the inclination was to hire outside professionals. However there was a team of volunteers within the church who were eager to help.

It took a detailed plan to convince the board of elders to commission the team of volunteers, instead of outsourcing the project. The analysis of the web project was done in a four quadrant approach. Various possibilities of a web project were analysed along two axes into four quadrants. The horizontal axis measures whether the user of a feature intends to save time or spend time. The vertical axis measures whether the user is interested in content or in community. For example: looking for directions to drive to church is a time-saving, content-based activity on the web site. Registering for a Sunday school class is a time-saving, community-based activity. Listening to a sermon is a time-spending, content-based activity, and participating in a forum discussion is a time-spending, community-based activity.

With the four quadrant analysis, church leadership prioritized various features that were to be incorporated into the web site. It was decided that content-based features would be implemented first, and community-based

features will be added later. Project Joshua become the code name of the web site project. The project was subsequently divided into three phases.

Phase One is the implementation of public facing contents. It is intended for visitors to quickly find the essential information regarding the various ministries of the church (time-saving content). After the basic information is posted, weekly sermons and bible study materials are published. (time-spending content)

Phase Two is the implementation of features that facilitate the communication within our congregation. Features include login/logout, individual fellowship pages, church directories, Sunday school registration, etc. (Time saving community)

Phase Three is the building of the team. In order to have ongoing support, we need to turn the website creation project into an Internet ministry. Focus turns from short term project implementation to long term mutual support between the web team and the church. On one hand, the church has to recognize the contribution of the team and provide spiritual support to the team members. On the other hand, the web team members, in addition to providing web design work, also train other church members in technology issues, including Internet copyrights, privacy, and other ethical issues surrounding technologies. In addition to serving the church, the web team also provides opportunities for mid-career church members not in web design to gain experience and potentially enhance their future careers.



### **A.2.3 Result**

Phase One was completed about twelve months after launch the launch of Project Joshua, which was significantly slower than an outside vendor would have taken. However we now have recruited a team of ten to twelve members, six of them actively developing. Among the team members, two were not originally in the software business, but were there to learn.

After the launch of Phase One, there were complaints among the English congregation. Their complaint was that the web site was too “wordy.” There is a significant difference between the Chinese and English congregations. The Chinese congregation wanted a web site to be informative and they are used to sites that are more wordy. On the other hand, the English congregation wanted the site to be more “flashy” and they specifically do not want to see Chinese characters on English congregation related pages.

We decided to pressed onto implementing Phase Two with the focus on the Chinese congregation because the English congregation was not interested in Phase Two. While we suggested that English congregation should hire a graphic artist because the web team does not have a resident graphic artist.

Phase Two is currently underway. The limitations are not in technology but instead in security, privacy, and access control. The church directory in particular is strictly controlled. Only registered members have access to the church directory. The Sunday School registration and attendance system has also been digitized.

Phase Three is also actively underway. We have gained recognition by the church's board of elders as an permanent ministry, instead of a project. Members of the web team meet monthly not only for technical businesses but also for mutual spiritual support and career support. The web team has also been invited to share in adult Sunday school classes and fellowships.

#### **A.2.4 Analysis**

Even though a church should be focused on building community, when it comes to its use of technology, this focus is often lost. The original plan to hire outside contractors was focused on one parameter, namely time to market. Upon review and discussion, the board of elders realized that time to market was not crucial to the success of the project. Instead the success of the project depends on long term support of a dedicated team as well as board based utilization of its capabilities. This demonstrates the principle of community over commodity (technology).

In managing the web team, we need to balance the multiple dimensions of talents and needs of both the web team and the congregation. The first dimension is the willingness to serve. Since the entire team is made up of volunteers, we need to keep up their motivations. A clear vision is necessary to help the volunteers understand the significance of their work. While we do not reward the volunteers with financial benefits, we reward them in other dimensions: for instance, mid-career workers can gain hands on experience with the latest technologies. We also recognize that the technology needs of the

congregation extends beyond simply a web site. Project Joshua has evolved into a “digital ministry,” which provide not only technical support, but also ministry support. For instance, we help the church in handling copyrights and privacy issues.

While Project Joshua emphasizes in the enhancing our church community, we also struggle with the weaknesses that are inherent in our community. Originally the board of elders wanted the web site to convey the message of “one church” - that is while CBCGB consists of English and Chinese congregations, we are united as one church. However the culture and expectations of the Chinese and the English sides are so different that a combined web site cannot serve both of them. It came to the point that the English congregation have explicitly demanded that they do not want to receive and/or display news and prayer letters from the Chinese side fearing that appearing “too Chinese” would turn off their non-Asian friends. The “one church” vision is far from being a reality - both in the real community and the digital community.

Overall, Project Joshua has been a bigger blessing than the original plan of outsourcing the service. Its success demonstrates how the applicable principles of recognizing the complexity of the community and putting community above commodity can be helpful applicable principles in organizing a project.

### **A.3 Google**

Google is a secular company, and it is very unlikely that its practices originate from religious beliefs. However, Google’s policies can serve as

examples of how principles raised in this thesis can be practiced in a secular company with positive results.

### **A.3.1 20 Percent Time**

“20 percent time” is one of Google’s most emulated business practices. Since its founding, Google employees are encouraged to spend one day a week working on their own “pet projects.” About half of Google’s products, including their most successful products like Gmail, AdSense, and Google News, are results of 20 percent time. During Google’s IPO in 2004, founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin credited the 20 percent time policy as empowering to the employees and promoting innovation:<sup>1</sup>

We encourage our employees, in addition to their regular projects, to spend 20% of their time working on what they think will most benefit Google. This empowers them to be more creative and innovative. Many of our significant advances have happened in this manner. For example, AdSense for content and Google News were both prototyped in “20% time.” Most risky projects fizzle, often teaching us something. Others succeed and become attractive businesses.

Google is not the only technology company that lets employees have time dedicated to innovation. Apple, LinkedIn, and other tech companies have followed Google’s example. In a previous generation, 3M allotted 15% of its

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1. Larry Page, “2004 Founders’ IPO Letter.”

employees' time for innovation, resulting in the invention of the beloved yellow sticky note.

Multiple reports indicate that after Larry Page took over as CEO in 2011, the practice of 20 percent time is in decline.<sup>23</sup> Since the practice has always been informal, it is difficult to gauge how managers and employees adhere to its implementation. Nevertheless, the idea of allowing room for engineers to be innovative has proven to be beneficial to the growth of the company.

### **A.3.2 Google Energy**

In 2013, information technology consumed 10% of the world's electricity.<sup>4</sup> Google's data centers consumed continuously two hundred sixty million watts of power in 2011. That is equivalent to the electricity consumption of two hundred thousand households.

Google pays attention to the impact of its energy consumption and started using renewable energy since 2007. In 2009, Google Energy LLC was formally formed. Google Energy does not only sell renewable energy to Google but also sell to the open market. It is the largest purchaser of renewable energy in the world. In 2015, 37% of the energy used by Google was renewable. Although Google still uses conventional energy, it has remain carbon neutral since 2007 by investing in carbon reduction outside of its business through Google Energy and Google.org, Google's philanthropic division. It has also invested heavily in the

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2. Mims, "Google's 20% time, which brought you Gmail and AdSense, is now as good as dead."

3. D'Onfro, "The truth about Google's famous '20% time' policy."

4. Clark, "IT now 10 percent of world's electricity consumption, report finds."

energy efficiency of its data centers and their servers. In 2014, they shared their research findings to allow other data centers to reduce their energy consumption.<sup>5</sup> Google's effort was followed by others in the industry, including Amazon Web Services.<sup>6</sup>

### **A.3.3 Analysis**

Google is an example where corporate citizenship is profitable in a highly competitive industry. Google has been conscious of its human resource consumption and natural resource consumption as a corporate strategy instead of an afterthought. These efforts fit into the "Let your debt be paid" narrative.

In the technology industry, the fertility of the human brain is akin to the fertility of the soil in an agrarian society. Therefore we can make the argument that practices like the 20 percent time policy is similar to letting the land furrow during Sabbath year. 20 percent time is a practice of sustainable human resource management. The history of Google has proven that leaving room for employees to develop innovation is good for business.

When Google started its push for renewable energy in 2007, the search engine business was quite mature; however cloud computing was only beginning to get traction. At the current trend, cloud computing is going to increase server demands rapidly. In the past, computers servers were designed around their speed and their storage capacity. Now power consumption is becoming an increasingly important parameter. Getting an early start on

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5. Google, "Google Green."

6. Amazon Web Services, "AWS and Sustainability."

renewable energy and energy efficient server design is not only socially responsible, it is also good business.

#### **A.4 A Real Estate Agent in Massachusetts**

I have known Paul for more than twenty years. He was trained as an engineer. However being a people person, he did not find engineering suitable for his personality. He discovered that his true vocation is being a real estate agent. After becoming the top agent in a major real estate agency for several years, he decided to become independent.

Being independent, Paul has the power and responsibility to decide on how he is to conduct business. As trusted friends and as parents with children of similar age, my wife and I have advised him on his business and his personal spiritual growth on numerous occasions.

##### **A.4.1 Analyzing the Business with Sabbath Principles**

As Paul looks to grow his business, he is aware that there are many potential pitfalls. Being a real estate agent is a service oriented job and the expectations of clients often disrupt family life and Sunday worship. Most of the open houses are shown on Sundays. Furthermore, the industry is highly competitive. The market is cyclical, with the recent boom in the real estate market bringing in many new agents whose intention was to make a quick profit.

Because Paul is a close personal friend, he allows me to evaluate and advise him on both his personal and professional life with the Sabbath principle

framework.

## **Be Content**

There are many temptations in being a real estate agent. Being content in the Lord provides Paul with the strength to resist these temptations.

As a Christian witness, Paul conducts business with financial and legal integrity. A real estate transaction is a complex process with many rules. For instance, a real estate agent may not pay an unlicensed person for referrals. However this rules is often ignored in the Chinese community where kickbacks are the norm. Since Paul attends a Chinese church, he gets a number of referrals from other church members. He is often put into difficult situations in which church members, not knowing the regulations, try to get financial rewards for sending business his way.

The real estate business is also very demanding. Often it demands working on Sundays. When Paul has to attend to open houses that are often on Sundays, he tries to schedule around them to allow for attending church services. He also augments his spiritual life with week day evening bible studies.

## **Mission Before Metrics**

Paul has discovered that his personality fits well with his career as a real estate agent. He is also obliged as a Christian towards the spreading of the gospel.

The real estate market has recently attracted a large amount of Chinese



investments, and consequently there has been a large influx of Chinese real estate agents. As an well-established agent, Paul is concerned with the professionalism of these new agents. He therefore made a commitment to train new real estate agents.

Being independent allows Paul to not be under the pressure of meeting sales numbers and quotas. He therefore can be more focused on making the right sale instead of making a quick sale. He has, for example, told families to stay away from buying houses they cannot afford. He also tells families not to rush into decisions, but wait for better options to come to the market.

By putting his mission above making sales numbers, Paul has established a good reputation among the Chinese community.

### **Let Your Febt Be Paid**

As a real estate agent, the services of introducing buyers and sellers to each other and completing an transaction is the main product of his business. There are also many side effects surrounding a real estate transaction.

First of all, there are many side products that a home buyer needs: mortgages, inspection services, constructions and remodelling, interior designs, and moving services are some of the obvious ones. Paul has to stay on top of his network of service providers, especially mortgage brokers and contractors, to provide appropriate referrals.

There are also less obvious side effects and services that a real estate transaction puts in play. For instance, the new home buyers are newcomers to

their community. They need to be connected to local civil services: schools, churches, health, etc. On the other side, the community is welcoming a new member. In the case of Paul, since he has a significantly higher proportion of Chinese clients than other real estate agents, he is also changing the racial make-up of the community.

### **Community Over Commodity**

While real estate is considered by many to be an investment vehicle, it is also the foundation of a community. In many Asian cities, housing has developed into a major social crises. In Boston, the rising housing market has become increasingly out of synch with local demand as younger workers find it increasing difficult to find affordable housing.<sup>7</sup>

As an real estate agent who serves many Chinese buyers, Paul faces buyers who buy houses for investment purposes only. They buy houses mainly as safeguards against market fluctuation or political turmoil in China. Many of them do not intend to live in those houses. These buyers are disrupting housing supplies. Fortunately, unlike the West Coast, overseas buyers are still in the minority around Boston.

While Paul does not refuse overseas buyers, he enhances community by serving buyers who are going to be engaged in the community. It is especially important for young families to find housing that fits both their financial conditions and their needs. Paul takes the time to counsel his clients into buying

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7. Fernades, "Housing affordability worsening in Boston area, study says."

houses that they can afford and in communities where they would fit in. Doing so not only takes more time and effort, but often hurts his commissions because he usually talks them into buying cheaper houses. In this way, Paul puts his service to the communities before his profit.

#### **A.4.2 Integrate the Analysis into the Business**

As a devoted Christian, Paul is already conducting his business with a high degree of integrity. On a personal level, my analysis of his business serves to encourage him to continue his good work.

As a business strategy, my analysis opens new business opportunities by serving to distinguish his business from other real estate agents. We realized that real estate transactions impact the community lives of not only the buyers and sellers, but also the neighborhood surrounding the properties being transacted. In Paul's case, there is an additional racial dimension of introducing Chinese families into neighborhoods of various ethnic make-ups.

Therefore, under the "let your debt be paid" principle, Paul and I agreed that the business should be active in helping new families with integrating into their neighborhood. The program is designed as follows:

- Information packages are compiled for each town. These information packages are intended to educate potential buyers about the towns as well as serve as a directory of social services that families might need, such as town government, churches, cleaning services, child care or elder care.

- When advertising the sale of a property, within the parameters of the relevant laws and with consent of the parties involved, include as much human interests as possible: a description of the previous owner, the artistic design of the house, whether the building is children/elderly friendly, etc.
- When a property goes on the market, identify the neighbors of the property. For example, Identify houses are within a half mile radius of the property. As early as possible, send letters to give the neighbors advance notice that the property is on sale. Although the neighbors are unlikely to be buyers of the property, they have a right to know when families are leaving or joining their neighborhood. Point the neighbors to a web page that tracks the progress of the transaction.
- After the sale, with the new home owner's consent, send neighbors a letter/postcard/email to introduce the new home owner's family to the neighborhood.
- After the sale, continue to followup with the new home owner at the six month, one year, and two year anniversaries of closing.
- Have regular meetings where new home owners can meet each other and share their experiences in their new neighborhoods. It might also be helpful to invite existing residents to meet their new neighbors.

Many of the above are extensions of marketing activities that most real estate agents are already doing. The innovation of the above program is to

convert the focus of these marketing activities from selling properties to building relations between the new home owners and their neighbors.

Paul is enthusiastic about this plan. He finds it to be an opportunity to distinguish himself as a member of the community instead of an outsider who comes in to make a quick profit. He hope that in the long run, he can develop credibility among the neighbors and in turn they will come to him when their needs to buy/sell real estate arise. He began implementing this plan the summer of 2015.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **TEACHING SABBATH PRINCIPLES**

Practicing Sabbath is a paradigm change. Not only are we introducing new Sabbath related concepts into our businesses, but we should also be reexamining our existing practices. In the same way, teaching Sabbath does not always require programs that are exclusively Sabbath focused, but instead Sabbath can also be infused into many teaching opportunities.

Here, three examples will be presented. We begin with integrating the teaching of Sabbath into Sunday school programs in a Christian setting. The other two are creative ways to inject Sabbath principles into other forms and occasions for teaching in a secular setting.

#### **B.1 Teaching Sabbath in an Adult Sunday School Program**

##### **B.1.1 Background**

The following programs and classes are either already in progress or are planned to be launched in 2016 at Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston, where I am serving the Chinese Adult Sunday School Committee.

The Chinese Adult Sunday School system has been well developed at Chinese Bible Church. Out of a congregation of about one thousand, roughly two

hundred and fifty members attend Sunday School regularly. Classes are offered throughout the year in four semesters. Winter and summer semesters are devoted to special topics. Spring and fall semesters have regular twelve or thirteen week classes that are divided into core classes and elective classes. The same five core classes are always offered every Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters. Every new believers has to complete all five core classes as a requirement for baptism; two classes to prepare for baptism must be completed as well as a pledge to complete the other 3 after baptism. The classes listed below are all elective classes.

Regarding teaching Sabbath in Sunday School, there is one class exclusively devoted to teaching the biblical meaning of Sabbath. For applying Sabbath into believers' daily lives, it is more effective to embed Sabbath principles into other Christian living Sunday School classes.

### **B.1.2 Sabbath Sunday School**

This Sunday school class is devoted to studying Sabbath in the scriptures. Each week the students are assigned a passage with discussion questions as a take-home bible study. Starting from week 2, each class begins with fifteen minute discussion of the take-home bible study from the previous week. For example, during the week between class one and class two, the students should have already studied Genesis 1:1-2:3). This is followed by a thrity minute lecture and the last fifteen minutes consist of student interaction: question and answers, discussion on the lecture and preparation for next week's homework.

Since the contents of the bible studies have already been covered in

Week	Topic	Passage
1	Introduction	Ex 20:8-11, Dt 5:12-15 <sup>1</sup>
2	Sabbath and Creation	Gen 1:1-2:3
3	Sabbath and Slavery in Egypt	Gen 47, Ex 5
4	Sabbath Day, Sabbath Year & Jubilee	Lv 25
5	Sabbath and God's provision	Ex 16
6	Sabbath and Social Justice	Is 58, Am 8:4-6
7	Exile as punishment for Sabbath violation	Lv 26
8	Sabbath after The Exile	Ne 10
9	Sabbath from Nehemiah to the Pharisees	Mt 23
10	Sabbath and the Mission of Christ	Lk 4:14-22
11	Paul's teaching on Sabbath	Col 2:16-12
12	Sabbath and Holiness	Heb 4

Table B.1: Schedule for Sabbath Sunday School

chapter 2, here I will only list the class topics in Table B.1.

### B.1.3 The Bible and the Workplace Sunday School

This Sunday school class is divided into two halves, the first half is about workplace theology and the second half is about business ethics and missions. The weekly class format is the same as the Sabbath Sunday school, with fifteen minutes of discussion over homework, thirty minutes lecture, and a fifteen minute student interaction. The topics are listed in table B.2.

Bible texts on Sabbath are explicitly taught in class six "Work and Sabbath" as well as in class eight as one of the Ten Commandments. In addition, a lot of materials concerning Sabbath are introduced as part of the Creation narratives in classes four and five.



Week	Topic	Passage
1	Introduction	
2	Career and Calling (1) - Biblical Perspectives	Dt 10:8-9
3	Career and Calling (2) - Historical Perspectives	Mt 10:2-4
4	Creation and the Cultural Mandate (1)	Gen 1:1-2:4
5	Creation and the Cultural Mandate (2)	Gen 2
6	Work and Sabbath	Lv 25
7	Business and Profits	Lk 16:1-13
8	Applying the Ten Commandments in the Workplace	Dt 5:7-21
9	Bribery and Corruption	I Tim 6:30, I John 2:16
10	Evangelism at the Workplace	Acts 18:1-4
11	Workplace and Missions	I Cor 9
12	Open Discussion: How can our Church Support Christians in the Workplace	

Table B.2: Schedule for The Bible and the Workplace Sunday School

In addition to teaching Sabbath as part of bible teaching, we also introduce practical aspects of Sabbath through the practical principles. The principle of “Be Content” will be covered in classes seven and nine. The principle of “Let Your Debts be Paid” will be covered in class six and eleven. The principle of “Community over Commodity” will be covered in classes three and ten. The principle of “Mission before Metrics” will be covered in class seven.

#### **B.1.4 Life Planning Series**

The Sunday school committee is always trying to boost the attendance of the Sunday schools. It was noted that young people — that is those younger than thirty — were not as active in attending Sunday schools as the rest of the congregation. When surveyed, their feedback was that the classes are not practical enough or do not address their life situations. After consulting with the

advisor of the young professional fellowship, we have decided to implement “Life Planning for Young Adults” to address their needs. For the sake of completeness, additional classes will be offered for various age groups. The final series will have four age appropriate subjects, beginning in spring 2016:

- Life Planning for Young Adults, Graduate Students and Recent College Graduates
- Life Planning for Young Families
- Life Planning for Your Mid-life
- Life Planning for Your Golden Ages

Since the series will involve a wide range of topics with a number of teachers with various areas of expertise, the exact agenda for each subject will change from semester to semester. The topics to be covered in each subject are listed in Table B.3. Note that each topic may span several weeks, so that overall each subject will still be in the range of about six to twelve weeks in length.

Sabbath principles are embedded into many topics. Topics that deal with finance (topics six, twelve, eighteen, twenty two) are opportunities to teach contentment. Encouraging mid-life professionals to reconsider their careers or take sabbaticals follow along the idea of repaying one’s debt towards one’s own creativity or skills. Encouraging them to engage in ministry and service urge

Topic	Audience	Topic Description
1	Young Adults	Dating and Marriage
2		Career and Calling
3		Risk taking and Entrepreneurship
4		Rest and Sabbath
5		Staying on top of technologies
6		Financial Planning
7		Advance Studies and Academia
8		Honoring your elders
9	Young Families	Work-Life Balance
10		Raising Children
11		Children's Education
12		Buying a House
13		Family Worship
14		Family Media Consumption
15		Building Your Social Network
15		Sandwiched Between Two Generations
16	Mid-Life	Work-Life Balance
17		Sabbaticals and Second Career
18		Retirement Planning
19		Ministry and Service
20		Being a Mentor
21		Caring for Aging Parents
22	Golden Age	Estate Planning
23		Common Health Problems
24		Staying Active
25		Leaving a Legacy

Table B.3: Topics Covered in Life Planning Series of Sunday School Classes

them to repay their “debt of the gospel” (Romans 1:14). For every age group, their life planning exercises reminds them to build their families and their communities instead of building wealth. Finally, as Christians our life planning is to focus on the mission of glorifying God instead of amassing wealth or building an impressive career. Topics five and fourteen urge people to take “Technology Sabbaths.”

In addition to practicing Sabbath principles ourselves, it is also important to pass our values to the next generation. Topics ten, eleven, thirteen, and twenty five serve that purpose.

## **B.2 A Parable: Lion King Wants an MBA**

### **B.2.1 Background**

This parable was submitted in Chinese to the online forum IQuest (<http://iquest.hk>). IQuest is a ministry of Quest Institute based in Hong Kong. Their mission is to spread Christian faith and values in the public sphere. The parable was published on January 20, 2015.<sup>2</sup> According to the institute, it received about forty thousand views.

The parable was written to condemn the culture of greed that often masquerades as the philosophy of “survival of the fittest” in Chinese propaganda. It teaches the principle of “be content” and how contentment is essential for the health of a living system. The story was written to be scientifically grounded in the research of Dr. Allan Savory on the process of

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2. Chan, “The lion who wants to out run a gazelle.”

desertification.<sup>3</sup> Other than the anthropomorphization of the lions, the descriptions in the story are realistic.

### **B.2.2 The Story**

There was a pride of lions on a safari in Africa, led by the old Lion King. Its only son, the Lion Prince, greatly admired human civilization. The young prince thought humans were the world's most intelligent animals because they could invent incredible machines.

One day the Lion Prince found a jeep full of tourists on the safari. The car radio was playing a business school lecture: "Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up, it knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve.<sup>4</sup> We need to constantly improve ourselves. This is what we call 'survival of the fittest'."

As the Lion Prince listened, it liked the idea. Discovering that humans actually used lions as examples in their teachings also made him really proud. Excited, he went home to report what he learned to his father. When the old Lion King heard that, he replied, "Idiot! Gazelles are too small to be prey for lions. Leave them for the cheetahs. We hunt bigger games like wildebeest and zebras. You never spend time hunting with the pride, do you? No wonder you have such a stupid suggestion!"

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3. Savory, "How to fight desertification and reverse climate change."

4. McDougall, *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*.

Being called an idiot by his father embarrassed the young prince. He secretly promised himself, "When I become King, I will use human management knowledge to reform the management of the lions. If we only maintain the status quo like my father, we will not survive."

A year later, the old Lion King finally passed away. The young lion's wish of becoming the new Lion King finally came true. After his inauguration, the new King began his reforms, "In the past, after we have gotten our food in our morning hunt, we took naps in the afternoon. That was just too lazy! With a deteriorating ecology of the safari, we must redouble our efforts in hunting or our survival will be at stake! From now on, we hunt twice. After the morning hunt, do not take naps in the afternoon. Instead, go out to hunt again. With more food, our pride will be healthier and more powerful!"

Of course when the lionesses heard that they had to double their work load, they were not very happy. But the new Lion King was really persuasive and they decided to give it a try. The afternoon heat in Africa made it more difficult to hunt. However the afternoon hunts often yielded younger and stronger preys than the morning hunts. This was because the strong animals often suffered heat stroke when they ran in hot weather. Therefore even though the afternoon hunts were more difficult, they were worth the effort.

In the first year after the new Lion King took office, the number of lions in the pride increased sharply. The lions were well nourished, strong, and healthy. The new Lion King became a big hero.

The next year, the number of wildebeest and zebra could not keep up

with the pride's increasing appetite. Their number dropped.

In the third year, the grass was not as healthy as in previous years because when the number of animals was reduced, there were less animal droppings that fertilized the grass.

By the fourth year, the wildebeest and zebra were almost hunted into extinction. With inadequate food supplies, the lions were forced to start hunting gazelle. Without the big animals, a lot of the grass was left uneaten. When the dry season came, the grass withered. Withered grass was strongly acidic and it damage the soil and reduced its capacity to absorb water.

In the next year, the fifth year, when the rainy season come, the soil was not able to absorb all the rain and flooding resulted. But after the flood, water quickly drained away on the surface without moisturizing the soil on a deeper level. Dead grass from last year still occupied the ground, new grass could not grow.

Ten years later, the once fertile safari had become a piece of desert. Most of the lions were either starved to death or had migrated away. The Lion King lost his territory and his pride. Eventually he was discover by a jeep full of hunters. The hunters captured the Lion King and sold him to the zoo. The lion who once admired humans eventually became a slave to the humans.

Evangelist Dr. Stephen Tong once said, "Once we called the savages among us 'animals'. Stop doing that! Stop insulting the animals! When lions have enough food, they know when to rest and be content. After the bankers and the businessmen have made their millions and billions, they still want to

make more money. Stop calling people 'animals'! Humans are much worse than animals! Stop giving the animals a bad name by comparing them to people!"

### **B.3 Executive Retreat: How to Build an Innovative Workforce**

In the highly competitive Asian marketplace, where long hours and overtime is the norm, we would need extra leverage to preach Sabbath. Here I propose embedding Sabbath principles into other desirable business qualities: for example, sustainability and innovation.

We have already discussed Sabbath impacting the sustainability of human resources in chapter 5. Here I will present an example of embedding Sabbath principles into a program that promotes innovation.

#### **B.3.1 Background**

In November 2015, MIT announced that it has selected the city of Hong Kong as a "global innovation node". Beginning in summer 2016, MIT will provide faculty, students, and researchers in Hong Kong and surrounding regions with resources to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.<sup>5</sup>

Being an MIT alumni and an engineer with extensive experience in the high-tech startup industry, I have both the professional credibility and the personal connections to reach out to companies in Hong Kong and China to promote innovation. I have received preliminary invitations to collaborate with two companies as a consultant in 2015; consultations will begin summer 2016.

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5. Matheson, "MIT announces 'Innovation Node' in Hong Kong."



This program is designed for managers of companies who are in the process of setting up internal ventures to explore new technologies or new product lines. It is formatted as a two day retreat, with three two hour sessions each, six sessions in total.

### **B.3.2 The Program**

#### **Session One - Introduction**

Session One will be the morning of day one. Its agenda is as follows:

- Get to know each other: participants introduce themselves to each other.
- Where do we find innovation?
- Case Studies: MIT, Free Software Movement, copyrights, and open source movement
- Discussion: Do copyrights and patents help or hurt innovation?
- Pre-lunch entertainment: Jennifer 8 Lee Ted Talk: “the Hunt for General Tso”<sup>6</sup>

The goal of Session One is to get to know the participants and the corporate culture. The introductory topic “Where do we find innovation?” leaves a lot of room for participants to explore their personal experiences of innovation. The ensuing discussion of “do copyrights and patents help or hurt innovation?” is an open ended discussion that can expose a lot about the corporate culture,

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6. Lee, “The Hunt for General Tso.”

especially in the context of industries in Hong Kong. Industries in Hong Kong are constantly under the influence of China, where the drive for profit often leads to a complete disregard for intellectual property laws. Meanwhile, Western heritage and strong laws give Hong Kong an understanding of the importance of the rule of law and respect for intellectual properties. Therefore discussion of this topic can reveal the viewpoints of the participants on a number of ethical issues; some examples would be whether the corporation respect laws and copyrights, whether the culture is primarily competitive or collaborative, how the corporation views profit versus innovation, etc.

In addition to providing insights on the corporate culture, this session should also begin to point the participants towards the conclusion that innovation is an organic process. One of the prominent answers to the question “Where do we find innovation?” is “We can find innovation in nature.” A number of examples can be made of inventions and innovations made by mimicking nature. The case study of the evolution of the free software movement and the open source movement and the work of Richard Stallman of MIT paints a picture where organic collaboration of software development in a community revolutionize the entire industry. The community approach to software development stood in contrast to the industrial approach by software giants like Microsoft and Oracle. Eventually, open source software dominated the market and forced all the major software companies to change their engineering culture and their profit model. Since the introduction of the concept of open source software in the 1990s, the Internet was built on top of open

source systems. Today more than two thirds of the world's servers are using open source systems.

We have therefore embedded one of our motivational principles “Remember that we are living systems” into our discussion of innovation.

### **B.3.3 Session two: Learning from Nature**

Session Two takes the concept of innovation within a living system and develops it. Here is Session Two's agenda:

- Is nature competitive or collaborative?
- Creating an innovative environment
- Example: Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg's office
- Discussion: Defining your environment
- Mission vs. Metrics
- Discussion: Defining your mission

The Chinese culture is known for being overly competitive. In order to promote innovation, it is necessary to highlight the importance of collaboration. Just as the well being of organisms depends heavily on the environment—the ability of the workforce to be innovative depends on their environment. Mark Zuckerberg's video tour of Facebook headquarters illustrates how the open layout of an office serves to promote openness and collaboration.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Coffee Break, “Mark Zuckerberg Live Video at Facebook HQ (Introducing New Facebook Office Inside).”

In the first discussion, participants will share about their own office environments, both in terms of physical layout and in terms of human interactions. Then they will continue to discuss the business environment surrounding their companies in general and their teams in particular. The goal of the discussion is to let the participants realize the complexity of their environment. If the participants need a more organized discussion format, they can use the following four categories: Market, Margin, Team, Technology.

A fact specific to the business environment in Hong Kong is that Hong Kong business leaders are very fond of Milton Friedman because of the high praise Friedman gave to Hong Kong in 1990s.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, particular to Hong Kong audiences, we need to steer them away from Friedman's shareholder value theory. Allowing the participants to define their environment as one that is complex and multifaceted will help them identify the stakeholders— thereby pushing them toward stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility.

After understanding the complexity of the environment in which the team operates in, the principle of "mission before metrics" can be introduced. The concept of "mission before metrics" was already discussed in Section 4.9 and will not be repeated here.

The second discussion "Defining Your Mission" helps the participants to articulate their mission. David Gill's book *It's about Excellence* provides an excellent framework for discovering and promoting an organization's mission.<sup>9</sup>

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8. contributors, "Milton Friedman."

9. Gill, *It's about Excellence*, chapter 4.

It is worth noting that in our context, the participants may not be in a position to influence the corporate culture, as they may be a small “innovation team” or developers of a specific innovative product within a larger corporation. In such cases, we can direct their discussion towards understanding the larger corporation as the environment surrounding their smaller team or product. Their discussions will therefore be focused on finding their team or product’s mission within the greater organization.

#### **B.3.4 Session Three: Failing to Innovate**

Since the participants are from larger companies, Session Three specifically targets the difficulties of innovation within large companies.

- Innovator’s Dilemma - Clayton Christensen
- Discussion: Can a large company innovate?

In 2015, there was a famous legal case in which Hong Kong police raided Uber’s local office and arrested their drivers under the pressure from local taxi license owners.<sup>10</sup> That case was an embarrassment to the Hong Kong government, as Uber was previously endorsed as a success story by investHK, the government agency tasked with attracting foreign investment.<sup>11</sup> This case introduced the Hong Kong public to the term “disruptive technology”.

As “disruptive technology” has become a buzz word, Clayton Christensen’s work on disruptive innovation will have no problem attracting the

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10. Shu, “Hong Kong Police Raid Uber Offices, Arrest Drivers.”

11. Lee, “Uber ‘success story’ removed from Hong Kong government investment agency website after police raid car-hailing app.”

participant's attention. Christensen's research had painted a gloomy picture of large and previously successful companies failing to adapt to new disruptive changes. The reason behind these large companies' failure to react was that the innovations were usually aimed at the lower end of their markets that had a lower profit margin. The large companies, under stockholders' pressure to maximize return on investment, often found it unprofitable to adapt to or compete with the new innovations until it was too late. In other words, these companies failed in putting metrics (profit margin) before their mission.

The discussion on "Can a large company innovate?" therefore should bring focus on "putting mission before metrics". There are other writers that have insight regarding innovation with large organizations— for instance, Charles Handy's idea of the sigmoid curve,<sup>12</sup> or Guy Kawasaki's *The Art of Start*.

#### **B.3.5 Session four: Innovative employees**

Session Four emphasizes that innovative employees cannot be motivated by salary alone. As Max DePree wrote, "The best people working for organizations are like volunteers. Since they could probably find good jobs in any number of groups, they choose to work somewhere for reasons less tangible than salary or position. Volunteers do not need contracts, they need covenants."<sup>13</sup>

Session Four's agenda, listed below, centers around attracting and keeping innovative employees.

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12. Handy, *The Age of Paradox*, chapter 3.

13. Depree, *Leadership Is an Art*, 27.

- Attracting the best
- Is money a good motivator?
- Keeping the best at their best
- Case Study: Google

The goal of Session Four is for participants to understand that the workforce should be a covenant community. Following closely the example of Depree, the participants will discuss how to motivate the employees. The focus will be on the complex needs of the employees as individuals and as a community. Recognizing the needs of the employees will then introduce the principle of “let your debts be paid”.

“Keeping the best at their best” will therefore involve recognizing the debts that the organization is incurring against its employees and the ways to pay the debts. Giving employees proper rest begins the process of repaying such debts, as Hong Kong companies are notorious for exceptionally long work hours. The example of Google, especially their practice of 20 percent time will be used as a success story.

### **B.3.6 Session Five: Innovation Without Borders**

The penultimate session starts with a review of previously explored concepts, and then it develops on the theme of corporate social responsibility as part of a company’s mission and explores how innovation can help a company grow responsibly. Session Five’s agenda is as follows:

- Extending innovation from individual to team
- Extending innovation from team to corporation
- Extending innovation beyond corporation
- Case Study: IKEA

Session Five begins with reviewing the importance of collaboration. It proceeds to challenge the corporation to form a innovative team to developing an innovative culture. The importance of a visionary mission will be emphasized. Finally, the discussions turn towards how the corporation's operations and its products are impacting the society and the world and how innovation can mitigate the negative impacts and create positive impacts. The participants will take the "let your debts be paid" principle and apply it to debts that are incurred against the outside world: the market, the customers, and the environment.

### **B.3.7 Session Six: perpetuating innovation**

Session Six put together what was learned and form an actionable plan to create and sustain an innovative culture. Session Six's agenda is as follows:

- What have we learned?
- Create our innovation dashboard

After a quick review of our previous session, the majority of the time will be an exercise to create an "innovation dashboard". While we have repeatedly



emphasized the importance of “mission before metrics”, a corporation cannot operate without a carefully designed program with carefully designed metrics to measure the program’s success or failures. An innovation dashboard is a collection of metrics that is custom designed to reflect the health of a company’s innovation program. The key here is to respect the complexity of the organization as well as the complexity of the innovation process. Therefore, we cannot be focusing on a few parameters (e.g. time to market, profit margin, market penetration, etc) but instead need a dashboard that covers the complexities involved.

In formulating the exercise, I am looking for a format that allow participants equal participation regardless of their rank and title in the company. I am adapting an exercise by Japanese management guru, Professor Shoji Shiba, from his Total Quality Management class at MIT Sloan School of Management in the early 2000s. Here is the process of the exercise:

1. Each participant is given five three-by-five-inch yellow sticky notes
2. They are given ten minutes to write down five goals (one per sticky notes) that improve innovation in the company. The goals should also reflect on the mission of the company / product as previously discussed.
3. With each goal, write down on the sticky note how the progress and improvement toward that goal can be measured.
4. When done with writing down the goals, the sticky notes will be posted on a large white board

5. All participants read the suggested goals. They are to move the sticky notes around, putting similar ideas close to each other, forming them into groups.
6. After the movements of the sticky notes slow down, the participants are encouraged to discuss and debate whether certain ideas should belong to certain groups or whether some groups should be split or merged. The process ends when all participants agree on the grouping of the sticky notes.
7. Circles are drawn to visually separate the groups of sticky notes.
8. Divide up the participants into teams, with each team focus on one group of ideas. Each team should have at least four people. If there are too many groups, a team can work on more than one group.
9. Each team is to come up with: A central goal that summarizes the ideas represented in the group; a consolidate set of metrics that measure the progress / improvement of the central goal; and how often each metric should be measured and published.
10. When all the teams are done, each team takes turn to present their work, starting with the team that has the most sticky notes in its group.
11. Based on the recommendation of the teams, formulate the “innovation dashboard”.

Once the innovation dashboard has been formulated, the participants should decide on how the data on the innovation dashboard should be

communicated: should the dashboard be physically posted in a public location? Or should it be an electronic version accessible online? Or should it be a periodic newsletter? The corporation should make commitments to measure and report on the metrics on the dashboard regularly. They should also make commitments to revisit and refine the innovation dashboard after one or two years, or when there are major changes in the organization.

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